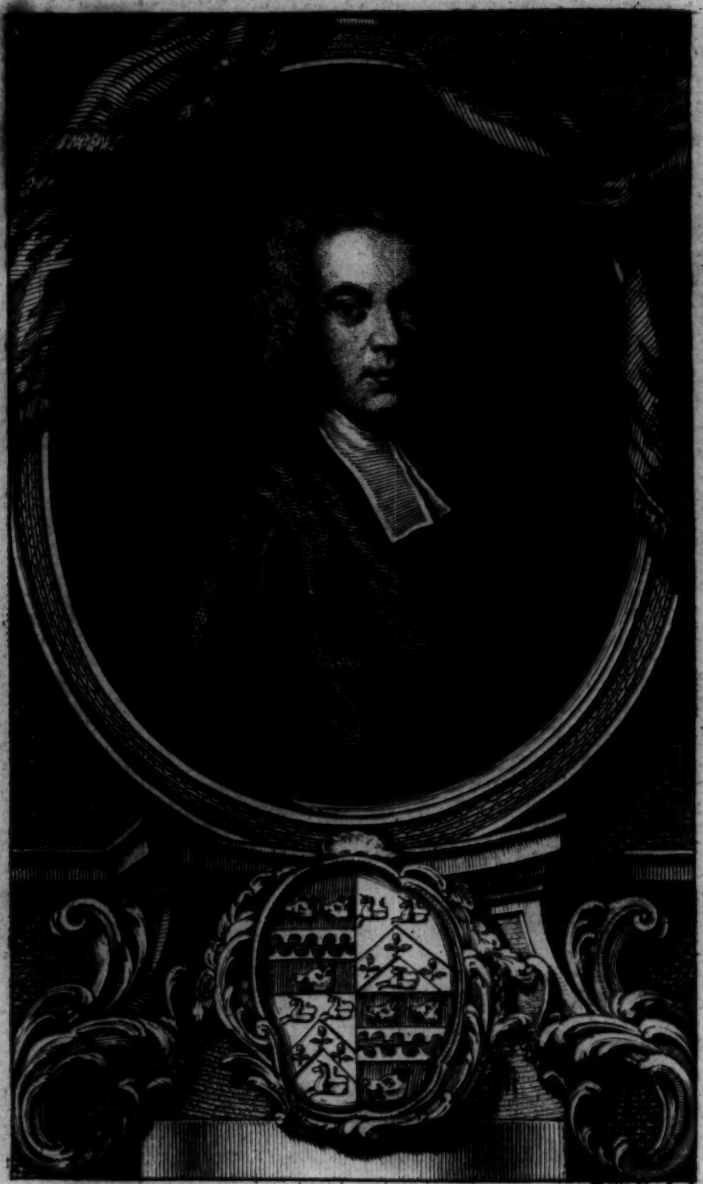
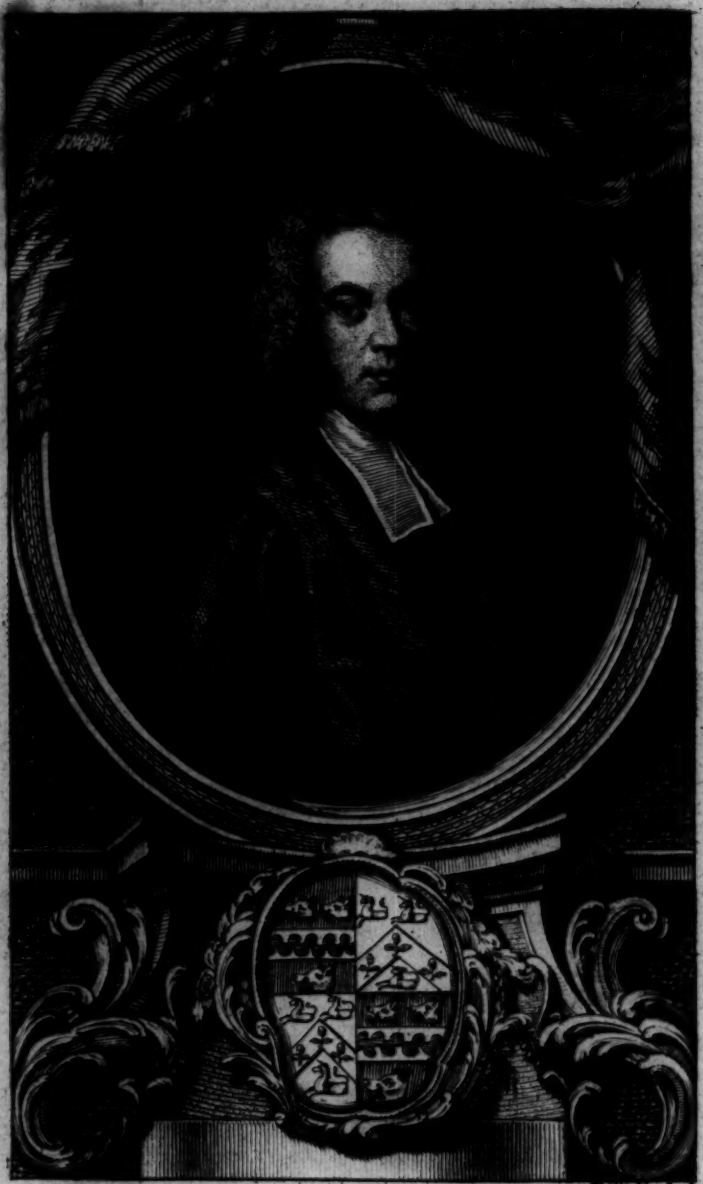


The Rev.d NATH.L LARDNER, D.D.
Born June 6.th 1684. Died July 24.th 1768.



The Rev.d NATH.L LARDNER, D.D.
Born June 6.th 1684. Died July 24.th 1768.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

Of the late Reverend

Nathaniel Lardner, D. D.

CONTAINING

A CATALOGUE of his WORKS,

WITH

Several LETTERS relating to them,

And other ORIGINAL PAPERS.

ALSO

EIGHT SERMONS

UPON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

LONDON:

Printed for J. BUCKLAND, T. LONGMAN, and JOHNSON and PAYNE, in Pater-noſter-Row; and T. CADELL, in the Strand.

M.DCC.LXIX.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

LIFE AND WRITINGS

OF THE

Rev. Isaac Watts, D.D.

CONTAINING

A CATALOGUE of his WORKS,

WITH

Several Letters relating to them,

And other ORIGINAL PAPERS.

ALSO

LIGHT SERMONS

UPON

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LONDON:

Printed for J. Buckland, T. Longman, and
Longman and Rivington (late Noble) in Paternoster-Row.
MDCCLXIII.

ADVERTISEMENT.

OF the following Sermons, the firſt four were fairly tranſcribed by the author, but probably had not undergone his laſt correction; the fifth and ſixth (preached at the Tueſday Lecture in the *Old Jewry*) were not tranſcribed, but had upon them this remark: *Peruſed, and ſo far as I am able to perceive, all is right; and I humbly conceive ought to be publiſhed:* the ſeventh was tranſcribed as far as the end of page 339: the eighth and laſt is entirely printed from his notes, and may therefore, with the fifth and ſixth, be conſidered as ſpecimens of his uſual compoſitions for the pulpit.

The editor was fearful of burthening the public with a larger collection, until he could form a judgment from their opinion of this ſmall number, how far a greater might be agreeable to them.

He thinks it proper alſo to inform them, that ſince this volume was in the preſs, two learned friends have kindly undertaken to peruſe and fit for publication *The Hiſtory of the Heretics*, &c. and that he has (from the progreſs the author himſelf had made in it) great hopes they will ſucceed; in which caſe, he ſhall readily ſend it to the preſs, provided he can have any tolerable aſſurance it will be ſo far encouraged as to indemnify him for the expence of the publication.

The

The portrait prefixed, is taken from the only painting of Dr. *Lardner*; but at what age it was done, is uncertain, any further than that it was between the years 1713 and 1723.

The errors of the preſs in this volume it is hoped are not ſuch as will affect the ſenſe in any conſiderable degree: they are therefore left to the candour of the reader, to excuſe and correct as he meets with them.

THE

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EPH. v. 16. *Redeeming the Time, becauſe the Days are evil.* *p.* 137—168.

SERMON II.

JESUS made a Curſe for us.

GAL. iii. 13, 14. *Chriſt has redeemed us from the Curſe of the Law, being made a Curſe for us: For it is written, Curſed is every one that hangeth on a Tree: That the Bleſſing of Abraham might come on the Gentils, through Jeſus Chriſt; that we might receive the Promiſe of the Spirit through Faith.* *p.* 169—196.

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The Promiſe annexed to Godlineſſe.

1 TIM. iv. 8. *For bodily Exerciſe profiteth little: but Godlineſſe is profitable unto all Things; having Promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.* *p.* 197—215.

SERMON

SERMON IV.

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SERMON V.

Internal Marks of Credibility in the New Teſtament.

2 PETER i. 15, 16. *Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my Deceaſe, to have theſe things always in Remembrance: For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty.*

p. 240—274.

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On keeping the Heart.

PROV. iv. 23. *Keep thy Heart with all Diligence: for out of it are the Iſſues of Life.*

p. 352—374.

MEMOIRS

MEMOIRS

OF THE LATE

Rev^d. Nath^l. Lardner, D. D.

THE Reverend Dr. *Nathaniel Lardner* was deſcended from worthy and reſpectable parents: his father, the Reverend Mr. *Richard Lardner* *, being, as the Doctor himſelf writes, a faithful and worthy miniſter of the Goſpel among the Proteſtant Diſſenters: his mother, one of the daughters of Mr. *Nathaniel Collyer*, formerly of the

* The family of *Lardner* ſeems to be of *Hampſhire*: the Doctor's grandfather was *Richard*, a merchant of *Portſea*; his great grandfather, *Thomas*, a cordwainer at *Portſmouth*.

Borough of *Southwark*; but afterwards of *Hawkhurſt*, (a large village in that part of the county of *Kent* which borders on *Suſſex*, about fifteen miles ſouth-eaſt of *Tunbridge*, and five ſouth of *Cranbrook*,) where the Doctor was born *June* 6, 1684, being the eldeſt child of his parents *. As to the early part of his life, very little account can be collected of it, any further than that after having made a ſuitable proficience in grammar learning at ſchool †, he acquired ſome tincture of philoſophy in an Academy in *London*, under the tuition of the Reverend Dr. *Joſhua Oldfield*: but here it cannot be ſuppoſed he continued long, as he went the latter end of the year 1699, being then ſomewhat turned of fifteen, to purſue his ſtudies at *Utrecht*, under profeſſors *D'Vries*,

* He had only one ſiſter, *Elizabeth*, who married the Rev. *Daniel Neal*, M. A. author of the hiſtories of *New England* and of the Puritans. And one brother, *Richard*, who was a counſellor.

† It ſeems moſt likely the Doctor had his grammar learning at *Deal* in *Kent*, his father being miniſter there till 1703 or 1704; but it is uncertain whether it was there, at *Hawkhurſt*, or *London*.

Grævius

Grævius, and *Burmann*; from the latter of whom he had a teſtimonial *: he continued in that city till the very latter end of the year 1702, or beginning of 1703, when he went to *Leyden*; and having ſtudied there about half a year, returned to *England*: from hence to the year 1709 no memorials can be procured; it is therefore moſt probable he ſpent this time in further preparation for the work of the pulpit, upon which ſervice he entered Auguſt the 2d of that year, and preached his firſt ſermon for his friend the Rev. Mr. *Martin Tomkins*, at *Stoke Newington*, from *Rom.* i. 16.

It may be proper to mention, that the Doctor was a member of the congregation under the paſtoral care of the Reverend Mr. *Matthew Clark*; but at what time he joined himſelf to that ſociety, is uncertain.

In the year 1713 he went to reſide in the family of lady *Treby*, widow of Sir *George*

* There went over with him the late Rev. Mr. *Martin Tomkins*, and they found there the Rev. Mr. *Daniel Neal*, who returned with them to *England*.

Treby, Knt. one of the Judges of his Majeſty's Court of Common Pleas, as a domeſtick chaplain and tutor to her youngeſt ſon, *Brindley Treby*, Eſq. In the year 1716 he travelled with Mr. *Treby* into the United Provinces, *France*, and the *Auſtrian Netherlands*, making exact and judicious obſervations on the inhabitants, manners, cuſtoms, edifices, and curioſities, of the countries he paſſed through, as appears by a journal he kept of this excurſion, which took him up four months. He continued in the family of lady *Treby* till the time of her ladyſhip's death, the beginning of the year 1721. This event ſeems to have removed him from an agreeable ſituation; for in his remarks upon it he writes: "I am yet at a loſs how "to diſpoſe of myſelf. I can ſay I am "deſirous of being uſeful in the world; "without this, no external advantages re- "lating to myſelf will make me happy; "and yet I have no proſpect of being ſer- "viceable in the work of the miniſtry, "having preached for many years without "being favoured with the approbation and "choice of any one congregation."

About

About this time he began to be afflicted with a deafneſs, which increaſed to a great degree, eſpecially after the death of his pupil Mr. *Treby* in 1723, for whom he had deſervedly contracted a very great eſteem, and who had, it may juſtly be ſuppoſed, profitted conſiderably under the inſtruction of ſo able, judicious, and learned a tutor: to this melancholy event, which greatly affected him, he himſelf in part imputes the increaſe of his deafneſs, which, in the beginning of the year 1724, was ſuch, that he writes: "Mr. "*Corniſh* preached; but I was not able to "hear any thing he ſaid, nor ſo much as "the ſound of his voice. I am indeed at "preſent ſo deaf, that when I ſit in the pul-"pit, and the congregation is ſinging, I "can hardly tell whether they are ſinging "or not. And ſo far did this malady proceed, that for the laſt fifteen or ſixteen years of his life, the only method of converſing with him was by writing.

At this time he was engaged with ſeveral other miniſters*, in preaching a Lecture on

* Dr. *Harris*, Dr. *Hughes*, Dr. *Chandler*, Dr. *Kench*, and Mr. *Godwin*: the two latter reſigned in the year

on *Tueſday* evening, at the *Old Jewry*, from whence perhaps originally ſprung his great work the Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory; for in *January* 1724 he writes, "I am now "preparing my third ſermon on the Cre-"dibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory;" and *February*

1723, and Mr. *Calamy* and Mr. *Mole* were choſe in their ſtead. One of the ſchemes for this Lecture was as follows:

Mr. *Lardner*. Of Moral Actions in general; the internal Excellence of Virtue; that Man is ſociable.

Mr. *Hughes*. The Duty of enquiring after Truth, and furniſhing the Mind with uſeful Knowledge.

Mr. *Harris*. Of Temperance: in Eating, Drinking, Diverſions, Chaſtity.

Mr. *Mole*. Of Contentment with our preſent Condition.

Mr. *Chandler*. Of Diligence (in ſome lawful Calling); Frugality, Lazineſs, Idleneſs.

Mr. *Calamy*. Humility, Conceit, Pride.

Mr. *Lardner*. Modeſty in Behaviour, Prudence, Gravity, Silence.

Mr. *Hughes*. Meekneſs, Anger, Sudden Paſſion, Government of our own Spirit.

Mr. *Harris*. Juſt meaſure of affection to worldly things, Fame, Honors, Riches, Pleaſures.

Mr. *Mole*. Courage in dangers, or reſpecting dangers, near or apprehended.

Mr.

bruary 5, "laſt night I preached my third "ſermon."

At this time, and for ſome years before, he belonged to a club which met on *Mon-*

Mr. *Chandler.* Patience, or Conſtancy under Sufferings, Afflictions, &c.

Mr. *Calamy.* Integrity, Simplicity, Sincerity.

Mr. *Lardner.* Chearfulneſs, Good-humour.

Mr. *Hughes.* Juſtice in our Dealings with others.

Mr. *Harris.* Obligation to Truth in our Words, Faithfulneſs to Truſts, Contracts, Engagements.

Mr. *Mole.* Regard to our Neighbours Reputation, Calumny, Detraction.

Mr. *Chandler.* Reſtitution and Reparation in caſe of Injury to our Neighbour in his Goods and Good-Name.

Mr. *Calamy.* Love, Good-Will, rejoicing in another's Welfare, Succeſs, Envy.

Mr. *Lardner.* Mercy or Pity, Condolance.

Mr. *Hughes.* Charity to the Poor, Infirm; Alms-giving, Liberality, Generoſity.

Mr *Harris.* Forbearance, Love of Peace, Condeſcenſion, Candour, Moroſeneſs, of avoiding to give Offence.

Mr. *Mole.* Forgiving real Injuries, doing Good to Enemies, Revenge.

Mr. *Chandler.* Reproof, Counſels, Admonitions.

Mr. *Calamy.* Follow things lovely and of good report.

day evenings at *Chew's* Coffee-houſe in *Bow-Lane*, where, for mutual improvement, two queſtions were propoſed every meeting by the chairman, for free and candid debate; and every member in his turn was obliged to produce an eſſay on ſome learned or entertaining ſubject.

The winter before this, another club was eſtabliſhed at the ſame place, to which he alſo belonged, conſiſting of miniſters *, who met on *Thurſdays*, and at this time they formed a deſign of compoſing a Concordance of things to the Bible, and began to methodize the book of Proverbs, having before-hand drawn up a ſcheme for the whole deſign in general †. This deſign however

* Mr. *James Read*, Mr. *Corniſh*, Mr. *Savage*, Dr. *Obadiah Hughes*, Dr. *Jeremiah Hunt*, and ſometimes Mr. *Ratcliffe*.

† The general heads of this ſcheme, and a diviſion of it in eight parts, were as follows:

I. Part. Mr. *Lardner*.

1. Of the Holy Scriptures.
2. Of God.
3. Of the Works of God.
4. Of the Providence of God.

II. Part,

ever does not appear to have been brought to perfection; and in *June* this year he was buſy, in writing a Diſcourſe on the external Teſtimony to the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion: but doubtful whether he ſhould ever

II. Part. Mr. *Corniſh.*

1. Of Chriſt.
2. Privileges by Chriſt.
3. Of the Holy Ghoſt.
4. Of Angels.
5. Of Man in General.

III. Part. Mr. *Hughes.*

1. Of the State of Man and Temptation.
2. Of Obligations upon Mankind.
3. Propheſies.

IV. Part. Mr. *Read.*

1. General or complex Duties, and ſo much as relates to knowledge.
2. Duties owing to God, and what relates to Prayer in general, and to Secret and Family Prayer.
3. Duties owing to Chriſt.
4. Duties owing to the Holy Ghoſt.

V. Part. Mr. *Clarke.*

1. Duties to Mankind in general.
2. Duties to Men in particular Relations.
   Magiſtrates and People.
   Huſbands and Wives.
   Parents and Children.
   Maſters and Servants.
   Miniſters and People.

3. Duties

ever publiſh it or not, the death of his dear friend Mr. *Treby* being a great affliction to him, as he wanted his advice in this particular, as well as upon many other concerns. However, in *March* 1726 he ſent part of the copy to the preſs; and in *February* 1727 was publiſhed, the two firſt

3. Duties of Chriſtians to Enemies and Infidels.

VI. Part. Mr. *Hunt*.

1. Duties on ſpecial Occaſions.
2. Duties owing to ourſelves.
3. Poſitive Laws of Chriſtianity, Church of Chriſt, and Publick Worſhip.
4. Motives to, and the privileges of obedience.

VII. Part. Mr. *Wroe*.

1. Afflictions, and the Ends thereof.
2. Comforts under Afflictions.
3. Duties of the Afflicted.
4. Of Death.
5. Conſequences of Death in general.
6. Of a future State.

VIII. Part. Mr. *Savage*.

1. Of Church Officers, their Gifts and Qualifications.
2. Vanity of the World.
3. Vanity of Life.
4. Rules of Prudence for the Government of Ourſelves and Actions.
5. A Compariſon between the Temper and Condition, preſent and future, of good and bad Men.

volumes,

volumes, or *the firſt part of the Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory:* which was particularly well received by the learned in general, both of the eſtabliſhed Church, and among the Proteſtant Diſſenters.

The beginning of *February* 1728, he was ſeized with a long and dangerous fever, which filled his relations and friends with great apprehenſions for his life; but by the bleſſing of God on the medicines preſcribed by Dr. (afterwards Sir *Edward) Hulſe*, who was called in to conſult with the other phyſicians, he was recovered contrary to their expectation; upon which he makes the following remark. "I think God put it into my "mind to ſend for Dr. *Hulſe*, for from that "time forward I mended." After his recovery he writes; "I thankfully acknow-"ledge the great goodneſs of God, who "raiſed me up again, and deſire that this "great mercy may be had in perpetual re-"membrace by me; may I ſerve him the "remainder of my time in this world with "inviolable integrity, unſhaken in my "ſtedfaſtneſs by all the ſnares of a vain "and uncertain world!"

Auguſt 24, 1729, having preached for the Rev. Dr. *William Harris* at *Crouched Fryers*, he received an unexpected invitation from the church to be aſſiſtant there, which on mature deliberation he accepted, as it was, he ſays in his letter of acceptance, peculiarly agreeable to him in this reſpect, that it allotted him a part of ſervice in the work of the Goſpel with their honoured Paſtor, for whom he had had a high eſteem from his early youth. *September* 14, in the morning, he entered on his work at that place, preaching from 2 *Cor.* v. 20; and in his prayer before ſermon he ſays; "After "the interceſſions for the publick, and for "Dr. *Harris* in particular, I prayed for "myſelf to this effect: — And we beſeech "thee do thou graciouſly aſſiſt thine un-"worthy ſervant, whom by thy Providence "thou haſt alſo called to ſerve thee in this "place: Grant that he may take great heed "unto himſelf and his doctrine, that he "may ſave himſelf and them that hear "him. Do thou enlighten him more and "more in the knowlege of the truth; and "grant that he may be faithful to thee, and "ſpeak the word with all boldneſs, not

"ſhuning

"ſhuning to declare the whole counſel of "God, ſo far as he is acquainted therewith: "And may the hearts of thy people be "opened to receive the truth with all rea- "dineſs; may they carefully and impar- "tially examine the things which they hear, "and embrace what is agreeable to thy "will. O Lord, our hope is in thee! do "thou ſtrengthen us and make us ſufficient "for what thou calleſt us to: let thy "ſtrength be made perfect in our weak- "neſs; cauſe thy face to ſhine upon us; "let us ſee thy power and thy glory in the "ſanctuary; may ſome who are yet in "darkneſs and ignorance be here enlight- "ened! may ſome be converted; and may "thy people be comforted and continually "edified more and more in their moſt holy "faith: may we meet with thee in thine "houſe! and have joy and pleaſure in draw- "ing near unto thee; may we by all thy- "ordinances, by prayer, by the miniſtry of "thy word, and by thy ſacraments, be made "more meet for all the events of Provi- "dence; for all the ſervices and ſufferings "of this life; and for the ſtate of perfec- "tion and glory in the world to come."

And afterwards he writes, "May God hear "my earneſt prayers in enabling me to per- "form this ſervice he has called me to, ſo "as may be for his glory and the edifica- "tion of his people."

In *November* this year was publiſhed *the Vindication of three of our bleſſed Saviour's miracles; viz. the raiſing of Jairus's daughter; the widow of Naim's ſon, and Lazarus: In anſwer to the objections of Mr. Woolſton's fifth diſcourſe on the miracles of our Saviour.* This treatiſe alſo met with a very favourable reception from the publick, and ſoon paſſed through a ſecond edition.

As ſome letters paſſed between the Doctor and Dr. *Waddington* (lord biſhop of *Chicheſter*) concerning the preface to this tract, I tranſcribe them as follows:

Eaton near *Windſor*,
Nov. 14, 1729.

Reverend Sir,

I Have received at this place your moſt agreeable preſent of a Vindication, &c. againſt Mr. *Woolſton*, and do beg leave to return

return you my moſt ſincere and hearty thanks for it; you have certainly took a very proper and Chriſtian way with him, and I wiſh it may have the deſigned effect upon him: I have no manner of objection to make againſt any one line in the book: you have purſued both him and his Jew very cloſely; and if they are capable of conviction, you ſeem to be the man whom God has raiſed up for that great ſervice: I cannot ſay leſs of your excellent performance; and what I have ſaid comes I aſſure you from the ſincerity of my heart.

Will you then, dear Sir, give me leave as ſincerely to take notice of a paſſage or two in your preface which as yet I cannot ſo well digeſt, if I take you right in them, and I am ſure I have no intention to miſtake you wilfully.

Page 4, you have theſe words, "If by way "of ſuch a reply *he means a reply without* "*abuſive railing terms, or invoking the aid of* "*the civil magiſtrate*;" and a line or two after you oppoſe "*ſolid reaſons and arguments*" to "*pains and penalties*:" Now theſe are paſ-

ſages

ſages that I own I cannot perfectly approve of: you ſeem in the firſt to put abuſive railing terms, upon the ſame foot, with, invoking the aid of the civil magiſtrate; and in the latter to intimate at leaſt as if pains and penalties had been demanded by ſomebody or other to be inflicted upon Mr. *Woolſton*, to ſupply the place of ſolid reaſons and arguments. If I am right in putting this interpretation upon your words, I muſt beg leave to ſay, that, in my poor opinion, there is no occaſion for them; I don't know any one perſon of character who in writing againſt Mr. *Woolſton*, has invoked the aids of the civil magiſtrate to inflict pains and penalties upon Mr. *Woolſton*, for being an Infidel, or writing againſt the Chriſtian religion; but only for writing againſt it in ſuch a blaſphemous, abuſive, ſcandalous manner, as I think may very juſtly raiſe the indignation and reſentment of every honeſt man, whether Chriſtian or not. The two biſhops of *London* and *St. David* have expreſsly declared this in print; and I believe it is the ſentiment of many more of that order in the Church, if not of all, that (as you very well expreſs it in the 11th page of your preface) "*it is the plea-*

"*ſure*

" *ſure of Chriſt that men ſhould not be com-*
" *pelled to receive his law by the puniſhments*
" *of this life, or the fear of them; but that*
" *they ſhould be left to propoſe their doubts*
" *and objections,—provided it be done in a*
" *grave ſerious manner.*" But give me leave, dear Sir, to aſk you, with ſome concern, whether Mr. *Woolſton* has propoſed his doubts and difficulties in a grave ſerious manner, and if you ſay he has not done it, as I believe you will, don't you ſeem to intimate yourſelf by putting in that reſerve, as if you thought the civil magiſtrate might puniſh him for not obſerving it? or at leaſt that there is nothing in puniſhing him for the breach of all the laws of Chriſtian charity and common decency, contrary to the will and pleaſure of Jeſus Chriſt. This then is the difficulty that ſticks with me in reſpect to theſe paſſages in your preface: and as I have very freely, and yet, I hope in a very friendly manner, mentioned them to you, ſo I doubt not but you will in the ſame free and kind way, endeavour to remove them; which will make me perfectly eaſy; for I am ſorry to meet with any thing in your

writings (ſo truly ſerviceable to the Chriſtian religion) that may give the leaſt occaſion of offence to the ſincere lovers of Jeſus Chriſt and his Goſpel. I am with the utmoſt reſpect, eſteem, and gratitude,

Reverend Sir,

Your affectionate

faithful Friend,

Edward Chicheſter.

To this Dr. *Lardner* anſwered as follows:

My Lord,

I Have received the favour of your very kind and friendly letter, for which I am greatly indebted to your Lordſhip. As your approbation of what I have writ in the defence of Chriſtianity affords me the higheſt ſatisfaction, ſo it is no ſmall concern to me that there has been any thing ſaid in the preface which is offenſive to a perſon of your Lordſhip's known judgment and integrity; who have alſo expreſſed ſo much kindneſs to me, beyond my deſert or expectation.

I believe,

I believe, (and think I may be poſitive) that when I wrote thoſe expreſſions, (preface page 4) I had no regard to a demand made by any one, of a puniſhment on Mr. *Woolſton* for his writings. I only intended to diſown, in plain terms, which might not be miſtaken, the principles of perſecution, which he had charged upon ſo many of his adverſaries. As when I mentioned a reply without abuſive terms, I had no reference to any reply written in that way, (for I have ſeen no ſuch, nor has he complained of any thing of that nature that I know of, beſides his being called an Infidel, whereas, he ſays, he is a Chriſtian) ſo when I wiſhed his conviction without pains and penalties, I had no reference to any demand made of them. But I do own, that, in the firſt paragraph of page 11, I had a reference to a demand, which I thought had been made for puniſhing him for his writings. And, I ſuppoſe, if he ſhould be puniſhed, it will be for writing againſt Chriſtianity, and not for his manner of doing it.

I am far from thinking that Mr. *Woolſton* has writ in a grave and ſerious manner: and

I have ſtrongly expreſſed my diſlike of his manner in the latter end of page 11, and page 12.

Your Lordſhip freely declares, he ought not to be puniſhed for being an Infidel, nor for writing at all againſt the Chriſtian Religion; which appears to me a noble declaration. If the governors of the church and civil magiſtrates had all along acted up to this principle, I think, the Chriſtian religion had been before now well-nigh univerſal. But I have ſuppoſed it to be a conſequence from this ſentiment, that if men have an allowance to write againſt the Chriſtian Religion, there muſt be alſo conſiderable indulgence as to the manner likewiſe. This has appeared to me a part of that meekneſs and forbearance, which the Chriſtian Religion obliges us to; who are to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long ſuffering. The proper puniſhment of a low, mean, indecent, ſcurrilous way of writing, ſeems to be neglect, contempt, ſcorn, and general indignation. Your Lordſhip has obſerved, (in my opinion) extremely well, that this way

way of writing is ſuch as may juſtly raiſe the indignation and reſentment of every honeſt man, whether Chriſtian or not. This puniſhment he has already had in part, and will probably have more and more, if he ſhould go on in his rude and brutal way of writing. And if we leave all further puniſhment to him, to whom vengeance belongs, I have thought it might be much for the honour of ourſelves, and of our Religion. But if he ſhould be puniſhed farther, the ſtream of reſentment and indignation will turn; eſpecially if the puniſhment ſhould be ſevere; and it is likely, that a ſmall puniſhment will not ſuffice to engage to ſilence, nor to an alteration of the manner of writing.

I truly think, that the Chriſtians of this nation are at preſent under a great trial; and I heartily wiſh, we may behave ſo under it, as may be moſt for the laſting honour of our Religion. It ſeems to me much better for us as Chriſtians, to err ſomewhat (if it be an error) on the ſide of tenderneſs and meekneſs, rather than on the ſide of ſeverity;

nothing having done the Chriſtian cauſe greater prejudice, than the ſeverities practiſed by ſome who have bore the name of Chriſtian. It has ſeemed to me (as I have ſaid) to be a conſequence of permitting men to write againſt Chriſtianity, that we muſt alſo ſhew indulgence toward the *manner*, in ſome meaſure. But no one is to be allowed to ſay any thing injurious to men's characters: this is properly a breach of the peace. I am perſuaded, that no man has been more ſenſibly grieved and offended than myſelf, at the abuſive treatment that has been given to men of the higheſt order and greateſt merit in the church. And if any thing of this kind has been ſaid, cognizable by the laws, no man can complain of a juſt puniſhment.

I have, my Lord, freely repreſented my ſentiments, which are ſubmitted to your Lordſhip's conſideration with the greateſt humility and deference. I hope I have nothing more at heart, than the general intereſt of the Chriſtian Religion. And if I have declared in favour of too great lenity, it has been purely becauſe I have ſuppoſed it would

would be in the end moſt for the advantage of that good cauſe.

I have the Honour to be,
My Lord,
Your Lordſhip's
Moſt obliged, moſt humble,
and obedient Servant,
Nov. 22, 1729. *N. Lardner.*

To which his Lordſhip anſwered:

Eaton College,
Nov. 25, 1729.

Reverend Sir,

I Have received your's of the 22d, and am very well ſatisfied with the explication you have been pleaſed to give me of your meaning in thoſe paſſages in the 4th page of your preface, which, upon the firſt reading, ſeemed to me to have a more particular view than you now declare they had, and I can very readily believe what you now aſſert to be true, and ſhould indeed beg your pardon for my miſtake; though it was by no means a wilful one: if the candour that appears in every part of your letter, did not tempt me

to think you have granted it without my aſking.

I don't ſee that you and I are likely to differ much, as to any other points touched upon in your letter; our general principles, with reſpect to the true method of propagating and defending our Holy Religion are, I believe, the ſame; and I wiſh as heartily as you can do, that no other had ever been followed by eccleſiaſtical or civil governors; but ſtill I am at a loſs how to underſtand what you are pleaſed to ſay, "*That there muſt be likewiſe conſiderable indulgence allowed as to the manner of writing againſt the Chriſtian Religion.*" I am not ſure whether, if Mr. *Woolſton* heard this, he would not ſay it is all the indulgence he deſires; for he has declared, *that he cannot write otherwiſe than he has done already*; and if for that reaſon, becauſe he cannot write otherwiſe, he muſt be indulged in writing in his own way, there is no doubt but that he will go on in writing after ſuch a manner, as you ſeem to think may juſtly raiſe the indignation and reſentment of every honeſt man, whether Chriſtian or not; and for

for which I cannot, I own, think that bare contempt is a ſufficient puniſhment; conſidering the great miſchief ſuch a way of writing muſt do, and daily does in the world: I am willing to indulge ſuch writers as far as ever chriſtian meekneſs and charity require me to go; but I would juſt beg leave to aſk, what opinion you think *St. Paul*, or any other truly primitive Chriſtian, would have had, of any perſon writing in *thoſe* days (and that while he ſtill profeſſed himſelf a Chriſtian) in ſuch a manner as Mr. *Woolſton* does in *theſe?* what you imagine their conduct would have been? whether they would have carried the Chriſtian principles of meekneſs and tenderneſs ſo far as to have indulged him in ſuch a manner of writing, in hopes of working his conviction in that way? It does not appear by thoſe inſtances we have in the epiſtles of the exerciſe of Chriſtian diſcipline in thoſe days, that they were then indolent in matters of ſuch conſequence to the Chriſtian Religion! nor do I think we are under any obligation to do ſo now, and therefore I ſhould be unwilling to give any indulgence at all to *ſuch a manner* of writing, much leſs a *conſiderable one*,

one, as your words (conſidering the occaſion on which they are uſed, and to which they muſt refer) ſeem to imply that we ſhould. You indeed, add afterwards, "*That no "man is to be allowed to ſay any thing injurious "to men's characters, and that if any thing "of this kind has been ſaid, no man can com- "plain of a juſt puniſhment, for this is pro- "perly a breach of the peace.*" Now no one who has read Mr. *Woolſton*'s books or pre- faces, can ſurely have the leaſt doubt upon his mind, but that he is in this reſpect guilty to the higheſt degree; and therefore, in your opinion, deſerves a juſt puniſhment; but beſides this, I think a ſincere Chriſtian may, and ought to go farther; he may very juſtly be concerned for the honour of his bleſſed Saviour, and have ſome real ſtirrings in his breaſt for preventing ſuch abuſes of that Holy Name as have no ſort of argument in them to perſuade and convince; cannot be the reſult of any fair reaſoning againſt the Chriſtian religion, but muſt neceſſarily proceed from a ſpirit fit to be abhorred by all mankind, and can never be a humane way of *propagating truth*, whether for or againſt Chriſtianity. Theſe, dear Sir, are

my

my free and impartial thoughts upon that particular paſſage in your letter which mentions the *conſiderable indulgence* that ought to be made as to the *manner* of writing againſt Chriſtianity. And I hope upon the whole, that you and I don't differ ſo much, even on this point, as we may ſeem to do. What puniſhments are proper for ſuch a manner of writing, or whether it may be looked upon as a breach of the peace in a *Chriſtian ſociety*, and ſo by your own allowance puniſhable by the civil magiſtrate, are points I ſhall not enter into now, any farther than to declare freely my opinion, that ſuch a writer ought to be puniſhed by the eccleſiaſtical cenſure of the church, and declared excommunicate by a proper authority; and if he could be farther reſtrained from writing on in the ſame *outrageous manner* by the civil magiſtrate, (with a liberty ſtill to uſe reaſon inſtead of railing) I don't ſee how this could be any prejudice to the Chriſtian Religion, any contradiction to the true forbearing ſpirit of it, any injury to the juſt liberties of mankind, or any injuſtice to the writer himſelf, but in my poor opinion the greateſt kindneſs that could poſſibly be done him.

him. I heartily thank you good Sir, for the preſent you have made me of your additions to your former excellent book, which I am ſure I ſhall read with a great deal of profit, as well as pleaſure, as ſoon as they come to hand; you will be ſo good as to excuſe me in not tranſcribing this long letter, which indeed, (conſidering the many corrections in it,) I ſhould do, but ſuch compliments between friends will, I hope, not be expected, nor am I ſure if I ſhould attempt it, not to commit again as many faults as I mend. I am therefore without any more ceremony, and with the greateſt ſincerity and reſpect,

Reverend Sir,

Your very faithful Friend,
and humble Servant,

Edward Chicheſter.

Dr. *Lardner* anſwered:

December 2, 1729.

My Lord,

I Have the favour of your letter of the 25th of *November*, which I hope your Lordſhip will permit me to ſay, is a pattern of

of condeſcenſion and goodneſs; nor can I help eſteeming it an honour to me, that my ſentiments are ſo agreeable to that truly Chriſtian ſpirit expreſſed in your letter.

The reaſon of my ſaying that it was a conſequence of permitting men to write againſt the Chriſtian Religion, "*that there* "*muſt be likewiſe conſiderable indulgence as to* "*the manner of writing*;" were chiefly theſe: that the permiſſion of writing againſt the Chriſtian Religion contained in it ſo much, that the *manner* of it alſo ſhould be bore with, in a conſiderable degree; and ſecondly, the cauſe of thoſe who oppoſe Chriſtianity is ſo bad and deſperate, that they who argue againſt it are naturally, and almoſt neceſſarily, led into an unfair way of arguing. If men are ſo weak, or ſo wicked, as to write againſt Chriſtianity, I expect to ſee them make uſe of ſome bad arts to ſupport their cauſe. The fact has been agreeable to this ſuppoſition. The writers in the defence of Chriſtianity have actually exceeded their adverſaries, not only in their arguments and reaſons, but alſo in the manner of arguing and reaſoning.

If

If what Mr. *Woolſton* ſays, that he "*cannot write otherwiſe*," be true, it farther confirms this ſuppoſition, and is a ſhameful truth for him and his cauſe, publickly acknowledged by himſelf.

To your Lordſhip's queſtion, what I think would have been the conduct of *St. Paul*, and other primitive Chriſtians, in a like caſe, I readily anſwer, my Lord, that, I believe, they would have pronounced a ſentence of excommunication, and it would, in my opinion, be juſtly pronounced upon Mr. *Woolſton*. The ſentiments advanced by him, and his manner of defending them, do both together, and each of them ſingly, deſerve that ſentence.

Mr. *Woolſton* has writ in a moſt abuſive and injurious manner to men's characters, but I did not know that he had been proſecuted for it, though I thought he well deſerved it.

I have alſo the honour to agree with your Lordſhip, that we ought to have a very great zeal and concern for the honour of our bleſſed

bleſſed Saviour, and an abhorrence of all ways, *not humane, of propagating truth, whether for or againſt* Chriſtianity; or that have a plain tendency to deſtroy a ſenſe of religion and virtue in men's minds.

I conclude with humbly acknowledging your Lordſhip's goodneſs in communicating to me your ſentiments upon theſe matters in ſo kind and friendly a manner.

I am, My Lord,
Your Lordſhip's
Moſt obliged, moſt humble,
and obedient Servant,
N. Lardner.

The late Lord *Barrington* alſo wrote Dr. *Lardner* a letter with remarks on this tract, which unluckily is not to be found among his papers; however, the anſwer to it may, as an addition to the pamphlet, be properly inſerted here.

March 7, 1729-30.

My Lord,

I Am very ſenſible of the honour done me by your Lordſhip's approbation of the

Vindication of three Miracles, &c. and have a great deal of reaſon to rejoice, that the manner in which the argument for free writing is managed in the preface is not unacceptable to your Lordſhip; for, as to the principles themſelves, I had no doubt but they would be agreeable to your judgment, however they may be ſuſpected or diſliked by others, who have leſs ſtudied the Chriſtian doctrine; a true Chriſtian may ſuffer on account of his religion, but he can never make others ſuffer on account of theirs. Whatever may be the conſequence of it, we are not to ſupport Chriſtianity by force. Our bleſſed Saviour, rather than make uſe of compulſion, would chuſe to be without a follower. *John* vi. 67.

I will briefly go over all your Lordſhip's difficulties relating to the death of *Jairus*'s daughter, and then offer ſome conſiderations in favour of the common opinion.

I. *There is not the concluſive evidence that Jairus's daughter was dead, &c.* The evidence is concluſive and ſatisfactory here.

If they might be miſtaken in her caſe, ſo they might in *Lazarus*, when buried: and if buried, while in a deliquium or ſleep, he might have continued in it ſeveral days.

II. To the text σώθήνεται is a general word. It does not directly expreſs healing barely, but that ſhe ſhould do well, let the caſe be never ſo deſperate; and this was as much as it became our Saviour to ſay at that time.

III. Our Saviour, your Lordſhip knows very well, did not ſpeak in Greek, but in Syriac. Probably he uſed one and the ſame word, when he ſaid *Lazarus ſleeps*, and the *Maid ſleeps*. That the Evangeliſts have uſed καθεύδω in one place, and κοιμέομαι in another, is of no manner of importance; ſince the diſciples underſtood him to ſpeak of natural ſleep, when he ſaid, *Lazarus ſleepeth*.

IV. The ſaying, ſhe was *not dead*, as well as ſhe *ſleeps*, does not appear to ſtrengthen the aſſertion. It is all one and the ſame thing. I think we ought to make no ſcruples here, now we have the ſtory of *Lazarus*, in which it is related, firſt, that Chriſt ſaid,

this ſickneſs is not *unto death*, and yet he did die: and then, *our friend Lazarus ſleeps*: meaning at the ſame time, that *Lazarus* was dead, and he would raiſe him up. As when he ſaid *Lazarus*'s ſickneſs *was not unto death*, he muſt be underſtood of a final death; ſo when he ſaid, the maid *is not dead*, he muſt be underſtood alſo of a final death, ſince all her friends knew ſhe was dead.

V. The matter of the fifth objection, ſerves, in my opinion, to ſhew the propriety of the common interpretation. *Be gone*, for there is no occaſion for you; the maid is not to be buried, ſhe is not finally dead, but will be raiſed up, as out of a ſleep; therefore your lamentations are not ſeaſonable.

VI. The laſt objection is taken from the circumſtances. I perceive no impropriety at all in the action of taking her by the hand, ſuppoſing her to be dead; nor in the ordering *meat to be ſet before her*. This laſt indeed would have been very improper in the caſe of the two other perſons raiſed to life, who were abroad, but ſhe was at home,

home. Their life, health, and ſtrength, would alſo appear ſufficiently in walking home before the company preſent, with all the vigour and agility becoming men. But as this other caſe was in a woman, who cannot with decency ſhow ſtrength and vigour by leaping, or agility in walking, and as ſhe was at home, eating was a very proper ſign to be given of her health and ſtrength. Moreover, as her reſurrection was performed before ſo few witneſſes, it was very proper to have ſome more near, cloſe witneſſes of her life and health; and ſuch the ſervants and friends of the family would be, when they immediately ſaw her eat.

The conſiderations whereby I would ſupport the common opinion, are theſe:

I. If *Jairus*'s daughter was not dead, *Matthew* and *Mark* have given no inſtance of a reſurrection to life by our Saviour; which would be very ſtrange, ſince there were ſeveral, and they appear to know there were. Another conſequence is this: If it be ſuppoſed, that *Jairus*'s daughter was not dead,

'tis impoſſible to prove to an Infidel, that the other two perſons were dead. Her friends ſuppoſed her dead; *Mat.* ix. 24. When *Jeſus* ſaid, the maid *was not dead, they laughed him to ſcorn*; *Mark* v. 40: and *they laughed him to ſcorn*, *Luke* viii. 53: they laughed him to ſcorn, knowing ſhe was dead. We muſt take the caſes of thoſe *Chriſt* healed or raiſed as they are brought to him, or repreſented to him by thoſe who may be reaſonably ſuppoſed to know what their caſes are; or we overthrow all evidence, and weaken the credit, not of this only, but of all the other miracles of our Saviour.

II. *Matthew* and *Mark* thought ſhe was dead, and that this miracle was a reſurrection to life, or elſe they would have related ſome other miracle of this ſort.

III. All the three Evangeliſts repreſent her dead. *Mat.* ix. 18. 24. *Mark* v. 35. 40. *Luke* viii. 49. 53.

IV. The common paraphraſe of, *the maid is not dead, &c.* that is, ſhe is not finally

finally dead, ſo dead as to be buried, but ſhall be raiſed, as out of a ſleep, is very agreeable to our Saviour's way of ſpeaking upon ſome other occaſions; and is extremely ſuitable to ſilence thoſe weepers and lamenters, to whom he ſpoke.

I intended to have concluded here, but upon a review, I fear your Lordſhip may think I have not paid a ſufficient regard to the firſt circumſtance of the ſixth objection; *viz. that our Saviour takes her by the hand, before he ſays, ariſe; which is not an action ſuited to raiſe one abſolutely uncapable to help herſelf.* There is no more aſſiſtance given to a lame man than to a dead man by taking him by the hand to enable him to walk alone. No action or word is uſed in working a miracle, becauſe there is any virtue in the word ſpoken, or the action uſed, of taking hold by the hand, or in any other action aſſignable. All the virtue is owing to the infinite, almighty power of God alone, who graciouſly performs the work, when thoſe words are ſpoken, or thoſe actions are done by his ſervants, by his orders.

Again, *That our Saviour takes her by the hand, before he ſays, ariſe!* Perhaps, the taking by the hand, and the word *ariſe*, were ſimultaneous, or the word *ariſe* was ſpoken immediately after Chriſt took her by the hand, as ſoon after as could be. But I ſhall ſhew preſently (as I apprehend) the propriety of the different method taken by *Chriſt* and *Peter*; though it is by no means neceſſary, that we ſhould be able to aſſign the preciſe propriety of every word or action recorded in the hiſtory of theſe matters. It ſeems to me, not becoming *Peter* to make uſe of any action, that looked like helping a man perfectly impotent (ſuch as taking him by the hand) before he firſt pronounced theſe, or the like words; *In the name of Jeſus Chriſt of Nazareth, ariſe and walk:* but after that, it was proper enough for him to uſe an action, which is a ſort of token of kindneſs, and take him by the hand.

When *Peter* raiſed *Dorcas*, he firſt went to prayer, and did not take her by the hand, till after ſhe had opened her eyes, and ſat up; that is, was perfectly reſtored to health and life by the divine being. It is too arrogant

rogant for an Apoſtle, in the caſe eſpecially of a dead perſon, to uſe an action, that has an appearance of giving help, before he has been at prayer, or made ſome other addreſs to God. But in our bleſſed Saviour it was highly proper and becoming, to take by the hand in a kind and friendly manner, even a dead perſon, as if ſhe were alive. Though no one would reaſonably ſay there was any impropriety in *Chriſt*'s ſaying *ariſe* to *Jairus*'s daughter, before he took her by the hand, yet there does appear to me a peculiar propriety in our bleſſed Saviour's taking by the hand this dead young woman, before, or at the very inſtant, that he ſaid, *ariſe!*

I hope there is no reaſon for me to add a caution, that it ought not to be objected to me, that there was no ſuch action uſed in the caſe of *Lazarus*, or the young man at *Naim*; becauſe the circumſtances of theſe caſes are perfectly different. It would have been the higheſt impropriety for *Chriſt* to take *Lazarus* by the hand, whether he had himſelf gone into *Lazarus*'s ſepulchre, or *Lazarus* had been firſt brought up to him:

it would alſo have been highly improper for our Saviour to have gone ſo near the young man at *Naim*, as to be able to touch him. He did as much as was proper before he raiſed him, in ordering the bier to ſtop. But as the young woman was laid in her chamber, and *Jeſus* was brought thither, near to her, his taking her by the hand is highly proper; 'tis one of the beauties and proprieties of our Lord's actions in this ſtory, which ought not to have been omitted, and with which I am now much delighted, and heartily thank your Lordſhip for helping me to it. It demonſtrates the plenitude of divine power, and divine goodneſs, that were, and are in him. It is an affecting endearing ſpecimen of the love and friendſhip of the Son of God, and in him of God himſelf, to poor mortal men.

But whether I am in the right or not in thoſe thoughts juſt mentioned, with which I now pleaſe myſelf, (but, however, do not think them of any great importance) I apprehend I may except againſt an interpretation of a ſingle phraſe or expreſſion, which is inconſiſtent with the reſt of the narration.

And

And I own, that I think this way of interpreting ſcriptures, would lead us into innumerable miſtakes. I am, my Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt humble and obedient Servant,

N. Lardner.

The concluding paragraph of lord *Barrington's* laſt letter upon this ſubject, I take the liberty of adding, as it contains his Lordſhip's character and opinion of Dr. *Lardner*. "Thus I think our controverſy "ends. But our friendſhip and correſ-"pondence I hope never will, but with our "lives. And our friendſhip I hope then, "but for a ſeaſon. I have had ſo much ſa-"tisfaction and inſtruction from your great "learning and judgment, and from your "patience, candour, openneſs, and oblig-"ing manners, that whenever I have dif-"ficulties to put, in the future courſe of my "enquiries, or want to ſee what difficulties "my ſentiments are liable to, I ſhall take "the liberty to trouble you, unleſs you for-"bid me; or (if your great civility will not "allow you to do that) I forbear, from the "ſenſe I have, of how much I rob the "world, in the reſult of the learned pur-

"ſuits

" ſuits they juſtly expect from you, by " ſuch kind of interruptions as thoſe I have " given you."

From this time the Doctor proceeded ſome years in an uninterrupted courſe of preaching, and carrying on his great work, the Credibility.

About the year 1730, he ſent the following letter to Mr. *La Roche*, to be inſerted in his Literary Journal.

SIR,

THE exact care with which you read the books of the New Teſtament, appears not only in the judicious remarks and obſervations, which I have received from you, but alſo in the difficulties which you ſometimes propoſe to me. As for the difficulty mentioned in your laſt, concerning the omiſſion of the hiſtory of our Saviour's aſcenſion, in the Goſpels of *St. Matthew* and *St. John*, though related by *St. Mark* xvi. 19, and *St. Luke* xxiii. 51. I might ſay, in behalf of *St. John*, that he had read *St. Mark*'s and *St. Luke*'s Goſpels: and that one main view he had in writing, was, to put down thoſe things which the other Evangeliſts

Evangeliſts had not mentioned: but I don't inſiſt upon this. This omiſſion may b accounted for by other conſiderations, which will juſtify *St. Matthew* as well as him.

I. *The deſign of all the Evangeliſts in their Goſpels, was to write ſuch a hiſtory of Jeſus, as would prove him to be the Chriſt.* That this was their deſign, appears from the Goſpels themſelves. And *St. Luke* has expreſly ſaid, that it was his: chap. xx. 31, *Theſe things are written, that ye might believe that Jeſus is the Chriſt, the ſon of God.*

II. *That Jeſus is the Chriſt, is ſufficiently ſhewn by his miracles, the extraordinary appearances from heaven in his favour during the courſe of his miniſtry, and by his reſurrection from the dead, recorded by all the Evangeliſts.* Our Saviour had himſelf put the truth of his miſſion upon his reſurrection, as a deciſive proof of his claim. *Mat.* xvi. 4, compared with *Luke* xi. 29, 30. *John* ii. 18—22. And *St. Paul* ſays, *Rom.* i. 4, that *Jeſus* was *declared to be the ſon of God by the reſurrection from the dead.* See alſo *Acts* xvii. 3.

III. *By our Saviour's reſurrection is always intended a reſurrection to an endleſs life, without*

out dying any more; and his aſcenſion to the Father follows thereupon: unleſs this had been the caſe, his reſurrection, without any mention of his aſcenſion, could not have been made (as it often is) the principal article of the Chriſtian doctrine. *To be a witneſs with us of his reſurrection,* Acts i. 21. *With great power gave the Apoſtles witneſs of the reſurrection of the Lord Jeſus.* Chap. iv. 33. *If thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth, and believe in thine heart, that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved.* Rom. x. 9. See alſo *Acts* xxvi. 23. 2 *Tim.* ii. 8.

But I will detain you a little longer upon this head, to ſhew both theſe things particularly.

I. *By our Saviour's reſurrection, is always intended, a reſurrection to an endleſs life, without dying any more.* This is ſometimes expreſſed; when not expreſſed, it is implied. *Whom God has raiſed up,* (ſaith *St. Peter*) *having looſed the pains of death, becauſe it was not poſſible that he ſhould be holden of it.* Acts ii. 24. *St. Paul* at *Antioch,* in *Piſidia: And as concerning that he raiſed him from the*

dead, now no more to return to corruption. Acts xiii. 34. *Knowing that Chriſt being raiſed from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.* Rom. vi. 9.

When not expreſſed, it is implied: *St. Peter*, in his diſcourſes to *Cornelius*, makes no expreſs mention of *Chriſt's aſcenſion*, but preaches only his *reſurrection*, as a proof that he was *made Lord of all.* Acts x. 40. 42. And the ſame Apoſtle ſaith, that *God has begotten us again to a lively hope, by the reſurrection of Chriſt from the dead, &c.* 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. *St. Paul* often argues in the ſame manner. At *Athens* he proves a future judgment by *Chriſt* from his reſurrection. *Acts* xvii. 31. And *Rom.* xiv. 9. *To this end Chriſt both died, and roſe, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the quick and dead.* and 1 *Cor.* xv. 12. and 20. Once more, 2 *Cor.* iv. 14.

I might likewiſe ſhew this to be agreeable to the ſtile of the Evangeliſts, in their Goſpels. When our Lord in *St. Mat.* xii. 40. publickly foretells his reſurrection, ſaying, *As Jonas, &c.* it is implied that he ſhould be

be no longer in the ſtate of the dead. This is implied alſo in what he ſaid to the diſciples, *Mat.* xxvi. 32. It would be tedious to refer you to all the paſſages to this purpoſe in our Saviour's laſt diſcourſes with his diſciples, recorded by *St. John: I go to prepare a place for you,* John xiv. 2. *Becauſe I live, ye ſhall live alſo.* ver. 19.

II. *Our Lord's aſcenſion to heaven was alſo ſuppoſed to follow upon his reſurrection.* This is evident from *John* xx. 17, when he ſays to *Mary Magdalen, Touch me not! for I am not yet aſcended to my Father,* or, I do not immediately aſcend to my father: it ſeems, ſhe ſuppoſed that being riſen, he would preſently aſcend to heaven. He therefore aſſures her, that there would be other opportunities for her to converſe with him, and to examine whether it was really he himſelf, or not; and for him to communicate to her, or others, what was needful, they ſhould be further informed of by him: *But go to my brethren, and ſay unto them, that I aſcend to my Father, &c.* which words ſhew that, *I am about to aſcend* to God, or, *I am riſen,* are in a manner equivalent terms.

This

This is alſo evident from *Acts* ii. 23—35, particularly ver. 32, 33. God's *raiſing him up*, was an aſſurance, that he was alſo *exalted*, or very ſoon to be exalted.

III. *There was no abſolute neceſſity, that the diſciples, or any other perſons, ſhould ſee Chriſt aſcend, or leave this earth.* For his exaltation to power was fully aſcertained to the diſciples by his reſurrection, (of which they had diſtinct proof) and by the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon them: to others, by the teſtimony of the diſciples, concerning his reſurrection, by the gifts of the Holy Ghoſt beſtowed upon them, and by the miracles they performed.

IV. *But though there was no neceſſity of it, yet there was great wiſdom and goodneſs in our Saviour's granting the diſciples a ſight of his aſcenſion from this earth*; as hinted by *St. Mark* and *St. Luke* in their Goſpels, and ſomewhat more particularly related, *Acts* i. 9--11. Becauſe it was of uſe to confirm them, and to encourage them in the difficult work they were ſoon to enter upon. 'Tis alſo of uſe the more to ſatisfy us, and all in

after times, of the truth of his reſurrection, and exaltation, though there are other things ſufficient without it.

Upon the whole, it ſeems to me, that the Evangeliſts have acted wiſely, and as the caſe required, in inſiſting chiefly on more important matters, than the ſight the diſciples had of *Chriſt*'s aſcenſion from this earth. And the concluſion of *St. Matthew*'s Goſpel (to ſay nothing more of St. *John*'s) after the evidences of our Saviour's reſurrection, is a very proper concluſion of a hiſtory of *Jeſus*, writ to prove that he was the *Chriſt*. And *Jeſus came, and ſpake unto them, ſaying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt: teaching them to obſerve all things whatſoever I have commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*

I am,

Your's, *&c.*

N. Lardner.

In

In the year 1733, was publiſhed, the *firſt volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility*, upon which his learned friend, and much valued coreſpondent, the Rev. Mr. *Joſeph Hallet*, jun. of *Exeter*, thus remarks: "Your new volume, with which you have "now obliged the world, will, I am per-"ſuaded, do good ſervice to the cauſe of "Chriſtianity: you cannot be ignorant of "my opinion of it, from the converſation "I had the honour to have with you about "it in your ſtudy.—Your method, upon "the whole, pleaſes me much better than "Mr. *Jones*'s, becauſe he hardly ever does "more than refer to chapter, verſe and "page; whereas you write the words of "the text and of the quotation at length; "and when he has a huddle of references, "you, in the caſe of Irenæus, prudently "chuſe *one plain quotation* of each book of the "new Teſtament cited by him. When "the work ſhall be all finiſhed in that "manner, it will be worth its weight in "gold, and all the Chriſtian world will "be obliged to thank you for it."

In 1735, he publiſhed *the ſecond volume of the ſecond part*; ſtill increaſing in eſteem

and reputation among learned men of all denominations; even the enemies to revelation bearing teſtimony to the merit of their opponent: Dr. *Morgan*, writing to him about this time, begins and concludes his letter with great reſpect.

Reverend Sir,

I Have lately read your *Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory* with a great deal of pleaſure, and profit: I obſerve in it a ſpirit of candor and impartiality, not very common in works of this kind; and I think you have deſerved very well of the learned world, by removing ſeveral conſiderable difficulties, which might ſeem to affect the Evangelical hiſtory. 'Tis a great unhappineſs to your friends in general, and to me as much as any man, that by the nature of your diſorder, we are deprived of the advantages we might otherwiſe reap from your converſation.

From what I had heard of your work, and of your known character, I had a curioſity to ſee what you had offered towards removing the difficulties concerning the hiſtorical and chronological account of *Chriſt*'s birth

birth and baptiſm as related by the two Evangeliſts, *Matthew* and *Luke*, or rather of *St. Luke* himſelf; for as the matter now ſtands, the whole difficulty reſts upon him, who places the birth of our Saviour in the days of *Herod the Great*, and at the time of the firſt taxation of the whole country of *Judea* by *Cyrenius*, and this by a decree iſſued out under the ſole authority of *Auguſtus*, without the leaſt mention of *Herod*'s name; and with this farther chronological character, that *Jeſus* was full thirty in the fifteenth of *Tiberius*. I muſt own that this has always appeared an unſurmountable difficulty to me, and that I am not yet able to get rid of it after a careful conſideration of all that you have obſerved and offered concerning it.

That any taxation, enrollment, or cenſus ſhould be laid upon the whole country by the ſole authority of *Auguſtus*, while *Herod* was ſtill king of *Judea*, and in high favour with the emperor, ſeems to me incredible; and I think no ſuch inſtance can be given, or any thing parallel to it, with reſpect to any country where the Romans own'd a king.

The thing here ſpeaks itſelf, and no man could doubt of it if he had not ſome prejudice or prepoſſeſſion to the contrary. But our chronologers, in this point, have been forced to offer violence to *Joſephus*, and to give up all his hiſtorical and chronological characters relating to the death of *Herod the Great*, and the nativity of *Chriſt*, tho' they are infinitely fond at the ſame time of maintaining the authority of *Joſephus* in moſt other caſes.

But what I lay the main ſtreſs on here is, the authority of *Euſebius*, towards the middle of the 4th century; who maintains that the taxation recorded by *Luke*, was the very ſame which was laid by *Auguſtus* upon the whole country of *Judea* after the baniſhment of *Archelaus*. And this is a deciſive point, and even a demonſtration with me, ſo far as hiſtory can be reduced to any thing of certainty, that *Luke*, *Joſephus*, and *Euſebius* were in the right; and that there was no Goſpel extant in the time of *Euſebius*, and own'd as authentick by the Catholicks, which placed the birth of our Saviour in the days of *Herod*. For 'tis not

to

to be imagined that *Euſebius* ſhould contradict the genuine, authentick, and recognized Goſpels of his own times, or that he ſhould make the Roman cenſus laid upon *Judea*, as mentioned by *Joſephus* and *Luke*, to have been the ſame, if this had been repugnant to the Scriptures of that age.

The 1ſt chap. of *Luke*, from ver. 4. to the end, is plainly a parentheſis, as it interrupts the courſe of the ſtory in order of time, and beſides, contains, as I think, ſeveral plain marks of ignorance, ſuperſtition, and forgery: for this parentheſis ſeems to have been taken from the pſeudo *Matthew*, with ſome farther additions and improvements, which made the matter look ſtill worſe.

In *Luke* i. ver. 28--33, the Angel *Gabriel* is introduced as appearing to the *Virgin Mary*, to aſſure her, by a revelation from God, that ſhe ſhould conceive, without the knowledge of man, in a miraculous way; and that the child born of her, ſhould be that great Prince or temporal deliverer who had been foretold by the Prophets. *He*

ſhall be great, and ſhall be called the Son of the moſt High: and the Lord God ſhall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he ſhall reign over the houſe of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there ſhall be no end. ver. 32, 33.

This, one would think, ſhould have been a ſufficient declaration from God, to put *Joſeph* and *Mary* out of doubt, that the child was to reſtore the kingdom to *Iſrael*, and ſettle an everlaſting dominion in the houſe of *David*, as God had declared by the mouths of all the Prophets; and as the whole nation had ever underſtood them, and founded their expectations upon them. And yet, afterwards, when *Zacharias* the Father of *John*, *Simeon*, and *Anna* the Propheteſs, came to propheſy the ſame thing, *Mary* was very much aſtoniſhed, ſhe *kept all theſe ſayings, and pondered them in her heart*, but knew not what it would come to, or what ſuch predictions ſhould mean, tho' ſhe had been let into the ſecret by a revelation from God before her conception. *Matthew* mentions nothing of this revelation from God to *Mary* by the Angel, but places the

the whole credit of the ſtory upon *Joſeph*'s dream, that which his ſpouſe had declared to him, or ſhould have declared, was true.

There is another remarkable difference between the pſeudo *Matthew*, and *Luke*'s Annotator, which ſeems to diſcredit the whole ſtory of *Chriſt*'s being born under *Herod*. *Matthew* tells us, that ſoon after the nativity of our Saviour, *Joſeph* being warned of God in a dream, took the young child and his mother, and fled into *Egypt* 'till the death of *Herod*. But his emendator in *Luke* aſſures us, that after the parents had been at *Jeruſalem*, and performed the ceremony of purification in the Temple, *they returned again to Galilee to their own city Nazareth*. Luke, chap. ii. 39. without the leaſt mention of *Herod*, or any apprehenſions they were under from him.

The genealogy of *Chriſt* in *Matthew* and *Luke*, ſuppoſes plainly that he had ſome natural deſcent, and that he was, as *St. Paul* affirms, according to the *fleſh*, of the *ſeed of Abraham*, and deſcended from the fathers of the *Jewiſh nation*. But the ſtory of our

pſeudo *Matthew*, cannot poſſibly be reconciled with this.

Our modern chronologers in attempting to juſtify this piece of falſe hiſtory, have been obliged to offer violence to *Joſephus*, and give up all his hiſtorical and chronological characters with reſpect to the reign and death of *Herod*. And had it not been for ſuch a prejudice, they could have found no difficulty at all in *Joſephus*, as to this matter. That he was made or declared king of *Judea* in the 5th *Julian* year, or in the year of the *Julian* period 4673, and that he died in the 42d *Julian* year, or the year of the *Julian* period 4710, would have been thought very plain from *Joſephus*, had there been nothing elſe in the caſe. In the *Julian* year 42, *March* 13, about three in the morning, there happened a great and remarkable eclipſe of the moon, which is mentioned by *Joſephus* as falling out a little before the paſcha, when *Herod*'s life was deſpaired of; and he died that year before the feaſt. This eclipſe happened on the full moon before the paſcha; and beſides this, there is no other eclipſe of the moon which

can

can ſtand in competition with it, within the time that *Herod*'s death may be diſputed; I mean no eclipſe viſible in *Judea*, or within the obſervation of that country.

You may here obſerve, that this ſuppoſed revelation from God to *Mary* by the Angel *Gabriel*, was the declaration of a thing falſe in fact, tho' ſuch hope or expectation had been deeply rooted and confirmed in the whole Jewiſh nation for near one thouſand years, or from the time of the revolt of the ten Tribes. For after this, all their Prophets had promiſed and foretold the reſtoration of the kingdom to the houſe of *David*, and the perpetual duration of it in that family after ſuch a reſtoration.

But *Chriſt* himſelf always diſclaimed this Meſſiahſhip, and declined all the overtures made to him about it; and he would not be received, and owned as that *branch from the root of Jeſſe*, who was to reſtore the nation to their antient liberties and independency, as had been declared to them from the mouths of all the Prophets.

When

When our Saviour came upon his trial before *Pilate*, he renounced this Jewiſh character of the *Meſſias*, and declared that he had never ſet up any ſuch pretenſions, that he had made no ſuch claim among the Jews, and that tho' this was what they charged him with, and he muſt die for it, yet they could bring no proof of it.

But ſurely had the revelation of the Angel to *Mary*, and the prophecies of *Zacharias*, *Simeon*, and *Anna*, been now produced and proved, the evidence muſt have been very ſtrong againſt him, and he had been juſtly put to death as an impoſtor and falſe prophet.

I know not what you may think of me, Sir, for the freedom of theſe obſervations; but I can aſſure you, that I am not at all intereſted in the matter, and therefore ſhould not be ſorry if the quite contrary ſhould happen to be true.

You may keep this correſpondence as deep a ſecret as you pleaſe, for I ſhall diſcover the ſubject of it to nobody without your leave.

I thought

I thought I could not talk to any man of greater impartiality and integrity, or who might be more likely to remove my ſcruples; and therefore I ſhall beg leave to ſubſcribe myſelf,

SIR,

Your moſt ſincere Friend,

and humble Servant,

May 10, 1735. *T. Morgan.*

Dr. *Lardner* anſwered:

Hoxton-Square, June 17, 1735.

SIR,

I am honoured with your letter of the 10th of *May*. 'Tis a great ſatisfaction to me, that the *Credibility, &c.* has been ſo far approved by a perſon of your learning and acuteneſs. I know, that I did not willingly diſſemble, or leſſen any objections againſt the Evangelical Hiſtory; and was in hopes, I had removed them to the ſatisfaction of the attentive and candid, who will make but juſt allowances for the loſs of ancient writings.

I ſhall

I ſhall offer a few things in anſwer to your letter, with a deſign of giving farther ſatisfaction, or receiving farther light myſelf.

You ſay, "*that any taxation, enrolment, or* "*cenſus ſhould be laid upon the whole country by* "*the ſole authority of Auguſtus, while Herod was* "*king of Judea, and in high favour with the* "*Emperor, ſeems incredible.*" I apprehend that this ought not be thought incredible, conſidering the few remaining accounts of the treatment of dependent princes, or provinces. You indeed put it, "*in high favour:*" but I have plainly ſhewn, that *Herod* was for ſome time under the diſpleaſure of *Auguſtus*. And it is evident from *Joſephus* himſelf, that there was an oath exacted, and an enrolment made at the latter end of the reign of *Herod*; an affair that anſwers very well to that mentioned by *St. Luke*.

But you ſay, the "*main* thing is *the autho-* "*rity of Euſebius.*" This ought not to be ſo. For it is not reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that *Euſebius* was fully maſter of the ſtate of every Province of the Roman Empire, almoſt three hundred years before his own birth, ſcarce of any

any one. A learned Engliſhman might be miſtaken about the time of ſome governor of *Jamaica*, or even of *Ireland*, who had lived two or three hundred years ago. And it is likewiſe poſſible, that *Euſebius*, though honeſt in the main, might have ſome partiality for the Evangelical Hiſtory. Therefore he applied that paſſage, which relates to the taxation after the removal of *Archelaus*, to the enrolment in *St. Luke*; that is, he was willing to have *St. Luke*'s hiſtory confirmed by a paſſage of *Joſephus*, which makes expreſs mention of *Cyrenius*: and therefore he took that, relating to *Archelaus*, or the time after his removal: but very injudiciouſly, to ſay nothing worſe. For *Euſebius*, in that very chapter, places the birth of *Chriſt* in the 28th year of *Auguſtus*, after the conqueſt of *Egypt*, and the death of *Antony*. And according to all our Goſpels, *Jeſus* muſt have been born in the time of *Herod*, or at leaſt before the removal of *Archelaus*; how otherwiſe could he have been crucified under *Pontius Pilate*, after a miniſtry of ſome years, which miniſtry could not begin 'till he was thirty years compleat, or in his thirtieth year?

You

You think it incredible, that there ſhould be a taxing in all *Judea*, in the time of *Herod the Great*. But how ſhould there be ſuch a one afterwards? when the land of *Iſrael* was divided, part made a province, part remaining under the government of *Herod the Tetrarch*, and his brother *Philip*. And if the taxation, after the removal of *Archelaus*, affected the territories of *Herod the Tetrarch*, you allow taxations of dependent princes. But indeed that cenſus made by *Cyrenius* after the removal of *Archelaus*, was not univerſal, (for all the land of *Iſrael*,) nor would it have brought *Joſeph* and *Mary* from *Nazareth* to *Bethlehem*.

I ſee no good reaſon to call all the latter part of the firſt chapter of *Luke* a parentheſis. 'Tis a part of his hiſtory, and is quoted by *Juſtin Martyr*, and other writers of the ſecond century. *Mary* might keep ſome things and ponder them, and be ſurpriſed, tho' ſhe had before had general intimations of them. *Luke* ii. 19. is one of theſe places, where ſhe is ſaid to *ponder*, and with good reaſon. The ſong of the Angels, which breathes nothing but peace and good-will, the mean circumſtances of herſelf

and her ſon at that time, might well lead her to ſerious meditation. Again, ver. 33. *Joſeph* and *Mary* had reaſon to marvel, when *Simeon* ſpoke of the nature and extent of this benefit, and went on alſo to hint the diſgraces and ſufferings of *Jeſus*. Nor are theſe things contrary to thoſe related in the firſt chapter, but only ſome farther explications of things there ſpoken by the ſame ſpirit, for the inſtruction of *Joſeph* and *Mary*, and the forming them to a becoming temper and conduct. For, chap. i. ver. 75. the deſign of this bleſſing now vouchſafed, is ſaid to be, that we *might ſerve* God *in holineſs and righteouſneſs*.

In all the Goſpels *Jeſus* is the king of *Iſrael*, and the *Son of David*. He no where diſclaims theſe characters, though he was not ſuch a Prince as ſome fondly expected and imagined, and others maliciouſly charged him to be. *Mat.* xxi. 15. There were many at the temple, who ſaid *Hoſanna to the Son of David*; whom he juſtifies, tho' the Phariſees were diſpleaſed. *Mat.* xxii. 42. *&c.* he ſpeaks of the *Meſſiah* as *David's Son and Lord*, ſo as to claim thoſe characters to himſelf.

Though

Though *Luke* ſays nothing of the journey into *Egypt*, it may have been performed according to the account in *Matthew*. The words of *Luke* amount to no more than an omiſſion of that affair, without denying it to have been done. Such omiſſions are common in the Evangeliſts. Don't you, Sir, plainly perceive many things related in *St. John*'s Goſpel, between the baptiſm of *Jeſus*, and the time when the other Evangeliſts begin their hiſtory of our Lord's public miniſtry?

In my appendix 'tis largely ſhewn that *Herod* died in the *Julian* year 42, or 43: I have not determined which; tho' I ſuppoſe the arguments there propoſed, appear ſtrongeſt for the year 42. But the matter is of no great conſequence, which of thoſe two years be right.

St. Luke's words concerning *Cyrenius*, ought, by no means, to incline us to think, that he meant the cenſus made in *Judea* after the removal of *Archelaus*, but rather the contrary. Theſe words are a parentheſis, and you know, Sir, that they admit of various ſenſes. Whatever is the ſenſe of that parentheſis, 'tis probable

bable that the deſign of it is, to diſtinguiſh the enrolment there mentioned, from that made after the removal of *Archelaus*.

Theſe things I ſubmit to your conſideration. I enlarge no farther upon them to a perſon of your learning and judgment. I am,

SIR,

Your humble Servant,

N. Lardner.

In the year 1736, the Doctor had another long and ſevere fever, which ſeized him in *November*, and from which he did not recover, ſo as to preach, 'till far in the following ſpring.

In 1737 was publiſhed his admired pamphlet, *Counſels of Prudence for the uſe of young Perſons: a Diſcourſe on the Wiſdom of the Serpent, and Innocence of the Dove; in which are recommended, general Rules of Prudence, with particular Directions relating to Buſineſs, Converſation, Friendſhip, and Uſefulneſs*; on receiving a copy of which, his Grace the late Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, then Biſhop of *Oxford*, thus expreſſes himſelf:

"I am alſo in your debt for thoſe excellent Councils of Prudence, which you publiſhed ſome time ago, and would gladly recommend it to you, to relieve yourſelf now and then from your great work, and oblige the world with ſome of theſe little pieces. One would hope they might do a great deal of good in it: and, I am ſure, there is great need of doing every thing that can be done to promote ſeriouſneſs and mildneſs amongſt men. The number of religious perſons is dreadfully leſſened, and thoſe who remain are very far from preſerving a due moderation and charity one towards another. I am very ſorry for the faults of this kind, which we of the eſtabliſhment fall into; and too many of you, I fear, are not leſs faulty; though I do not take the ſpirit of ſome papers, to be the ſpirit of the diſſenters. May God make us all wiſer and better; and may he long preſerve your health, dear Sir, to be uſeful to his church.

I am,

With great eſteem and affection,

Your moſt obedient,

humble Servant,

Thomas Oxford."

To

To which Dr. *Lardner* anſwered:

Hoxton-Square,
Oct. 13, 1737.

My Lord,

I Have the favour of your very kind and obliging letter of *Oct.* 1. Your continued approbation of the work I have in hand, as well as of the leſſer piece, affords me a high pleaſure, in which I indulge myſelf the more, eſteeming your Lordſhip's favourable judgment a reaſonable ground of ſatisfaction. I wiſh I might be ſo happy as to contribute ſomething that might promote the laudable diſpoſitions, for which your Lordſhip expreſſes ſo juſt a concern. It has been my care, not to loſe any opportunities in my larger deſign, of producing ſuch things as might give my readers an agreeable and affecting idea of the virtue of the primitive Chriſtians; ſuppoſing this to be one very likely method of recommending true piety: ſome inſtances of which, doubtleſs, your Lordſhip has obſerved already, and will ſee more in the laſt volume, when your weighty affairs will admit of leiſure. Beſides which, I may have occaſion to publiſh

ſome leſſer pieces with the ſame view. Your Lordſhip's recommendation is no ſmall encouragement; though men are at preſent ſo taken up about matters foreign both to literature and religion, that it ſeems very difficult to engage their attention upon thoſe points. 'Tis a melancholy thing, that the number of religious perſons ſhould be leſſened in our time, when we boaſt ſo much of our light and knowledge. I have not received any information concerning the writer or writers of the papers, to which your Lordſhip refers; but I believe your Lordſhip to be in the right, in ſuppoſing that there are many diſſenters, by whom they are not approved. So far as I know, the diſſenters are generally in a good temper. Some indeed, were ſoured by a late diſappointment. And they were chiefly of thoſe who uſed to be reputed men of moderation and charity, and who were far from being diſaffected to the church of *England*. For theſe, as it ſeems, were the men, who were moſt earneſt in the affair: though all ſuch did not engage in it with equal earneſtneſs. Perhaps this may deſerve to be conſidered. But I would not be tedious to your Lordſhip, whoſe time,

I'm

I'm ſenſible, is very precious. The delay in acknowledging your favour, has been owing to a ſuppoſition of your abſence from home. I now entreat your Lordſhip to believe, that

I am,

With great reſpect and eſteem,

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt humble and obedient Servant,

N. Lardner.

In 1738 was publiſhed, *the third volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility.*

This year alſo he drew up the following *Remarks upon ſome difficulties concerning the Chriſtian Doctrine,* in a letter to a friend, who had conſulted him in relation to the objections he here anſwers:

"As to the excellence and uſefulneſs of the rules of Chriſtianity, ſeveral ſtrong objections have been made. The ſubſtance of them is as followeth.

Obj. In the Goſpel there are many excellent precepts; but ſince they are the effect of heavenly inſpiration, ſhould not they have been rather ſupported with ſhort and clear reaſons, than delivered in the way of authority?

Anſ. I. It cannot be improper for a perſon who has a heavenly inſpiration, or divine commiſſion, to ſpeak ſometimes, or even often, in the way of authority.

II. When our Saviour delivers precepts in the way of authority, the fitneſs of ſo doing may be perceived. Particularly, this is obſervable in the 5th chapter of *St. Matthew*'s Goſpel, where he repreſents the deſign of his commiſſion, and the nature of his doctrine. The Jews expected not a reformation under the *Meſſiah*, but great earthly advantages and great ſenſual indulgences. He therefore ſays, *Mat.* v. 17. *think not, that I am come to deſtroy the law, or the Prophets. I am not come to deſtroy, but to fulfil.* The deſign of my commiſſion is not to abrogate or weaken, but rather to confirm, ſtrengthen and enlarge the moral precepts and obligations contained

tained in, or taught by the law and the prophets. Then at ver. 21. *Ye have heard that it has been ſaid by them of old time*, (it ſhould be rendered, to the ancients, ἐῤῥέθη τοῖς ἀρχαίοις) *Thou ſhalt not kill.* This is the ſixth commandment delivered by divine authority in the law of *Moſes*, forbidding in expreſs words actual murder only. And 'tis likely, that many of the Phariſees taught, that forbearing the ſin expreſsly forbidden in the law was ſufficient. When therefore *Chriſt* taught the reſtraint or moderation of anger, as a neceſſary duty, and as a compleating, fulfilling, or enlarging that law; was it not fit to ſpeak in the way of authority? as a divine teacher, furniſhed with a commiſſion from heaven, as he does ver. 22. *But I ſay unto you, whoſoever is angry with his brother without a cauſe*, and what follows. This obſervation ought to be applied to the other precepts of the law of *Moſes*, afterwards inſiſted on, and in a like manner fulfilled by our Saviour.

III. The laws or precepts of *Chriſt* being in themſelves all reaſonable, need not to be demonſtrated. When once they are

propoſed with authority, the mind aſſents to them immediately; they having an internal and manifeſt reaſonableneſs and equity. Is not this evident in that rule *Mat.* vi. 12. *Whatſoever ye would that men ſhould do unto you, do ye even ſo to them.* The reaſonableneſs of all *Chriſt*'s other precepts is alike evident.

IV. Nevertheleſs *Chriſt* does reaſon ſometimes, and gives ſuch ſhort and clear reaſons as the objecter requires. He heaps up reaſons in a conciſe manner againſt ſolicitude or anxiety, *Mat.* vi. 25—34. and *Luke* xii. 15. he forbids covetouſneſs in theſe words: *Take heed, and beware of covetouſneſs:* and then adds that excellent reaſon, FOR *a man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance of the things which he poſſeſſeth:* and proceeds likewiſe to confirm and illuſtrate his doctrine by a parable. And in a like manner often. Thus when, *Mat.* v. 33. he improves or fulfils the precept or prohibition of the law, which ſays, *thou ſhalt not forſwear thyſelf*, and forbids ſwearing at all, that is in common converſation, he argues, and by reaſons ſhews, the folly and wickedneſs of thoſe mincing oaths which

which were uſed by the Jews, who ſcrupled uſing the name of God expreſsly. ver. 33--37. Ver. 34. *But I ſay unto you, ſwear not at all, neither by heaven,* FOR *it is God's throne: nor by the earth,* FOR *it is his foot-ſtool*; and what follows, giving a reaſon againſt every one of thoſe oaths, and ſhewing that they were each one of them equivalent to ſwearing by the name of God: and then laſtly ſhews the wickedneſs of all common ſwearing in ordinary converſation. Ver. 37. *But let your communication be yea, yea; nay, nay:* FOR *whatſoever is more than theſe cometh of evil.* This is the deſign of all the context.

Obj. It is farther urged, that many things are forbidden in the moſt ſtrict and ſevere manner, which are innocent, indifferent, or however not directly criminal. Thus, calling Fool and Raca are offences againſt which the judgment of hell fire are denounced. Looking on a woman and luſting after her are equally culpable with committing adultery. Is the venereal act more criminal than any other? is it not equally natural and neceſſary? Can we forbear liking an agreeable object?

Anſ.

Anſ. In the particulars firſt mentioned, *Chriſt* only forbids that anger, which is really evil and unreaſonable; and thoſe injurious and contemptuous expreſſions or names, which are really improper and unbecoming, and which we ought not to give each other at all, or not without very good and ſufficient reaſon. And then theſe, or ſomewhat like them, may be uſed without contracting guilt. So *St. Paul* ſays, 1 *Cor.* xv. 36. *thou fool:* and *Chriſt* ſays, *Luke* xiii. 32. *tell that fox:* However it may be obſerved, that the two words forbid by *Chriſt*, are reckoned by commentators to be expreſſive of the utmoſt contempt; and therefore are not to be indulged by us.

As to what concerns the thing next mentioned, the objector proceeds too faſt. The original word uſed by *Chriſt* for WOMAN, and the context, and every expreſſion there made uſe of, ſhews that our Lord is ſpeaking of a *married woman*; and the obvious literal ſenſe of the words is this: *That whoſoever caſts an eye upon a married woman, ſo as to deſire* to have venereal commerce with her, *has committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

heart. And is not this ſelf evident? Have not all mankind that have been civilized eſteemed adultery a ſin, or injurious? and if any action be criminal, the intention to do it is alſo criminal; and men who indulge criminal deſigns and intentions, muſt be guilty in the ſight of God; for God, who is the governor of the world, and particularly of rational and intelligent agents, is judge of thoughts as well as actions. Civil magiſtrates can judge only of words and actions; but God can and does judge thoughts. All theſe things are evident beyond diſpute. And no wiſe and good man, but, when he knows a woman is married, caſts off his eye from her, or ſuffers not concupiſcence to ariſe, and if it does, checks and condemns it: And every man ought to do ſo.

Obj. How impracticable and intolerable are ſome other precepts? ſuch as theſe, *Whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo: If any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo.*

Anſ. I. Theſe precepts relate to ſmall matters,

II. They

II. They are hyperbolical and proverbial expreſſions, and not to be explained or underſtood literally. That they are ſo, is evident. 'Tis ſaid, *John* xviii. 22. *And when he had thus ſpoken, one of the officers which ſtood by, ſtruck Jeſus with the palm of his hand.* But our Lord does not offer himſelf to receive another blow. On the contrary, he remonſtrates againſt the injury done him, ver. 23. *Jeſus anſwered him, If I have ſpoken evil, bear witneſs of the evil; but if well, why ſmiteſt thou me?* And *St. Paul* directs, 2 *Theſſ.* iii. 10. *We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither ſhould he eat:* which ſufficiently ſhews, that Chriſtians need not be impoſed upon, though *Chriſt* has ſaid, *give to every one that aſketh thee*; and *St. Paul* has earneſtly taught diligence in the two epiſtles to the *Theſſalonians*, as well as in other places.

Obj. And are we not forbidden to take thought for the morrow?

Anſ. The precept is, Μη μεριμνᾶτε; be not anxious, or ſollicitous; or, be not anxiouſly thoughtful, or careful. Which is a reaſonable precept.

Obj.

Obj. In order to perſuade to an unreſiſting ſubmiſſion and ſubjection to governments of the moſt cruel and abſolute kind, is not the doctrine of the New Teſtament urged and pleaded?

Anſ. St. Paul's directions, *Rom.* xiii. and *St. Peter*'s, 1 ep. ii. 13. are very reaſonable. There were ſome Jews at that time, whom Chriſtians were in danger of following, who refuſed obedience to heathen magiſtrates, eſpecially to their inferior governors and officers. The Apoſtles therefore charge their converts to be obedient to magiſtrates of every rank. And as magiſtracy is neceſſary, and very uſeful, obedience thereto is very reaſonable, and ſubmiſſion muſt be earneſtly recommended. The Apoſtle's inſtructions upon this head afford no ſupport to arguments for unreſiſting ſubmiſſion to cruel and abſolute governments, for their exhortations are founded in the benefit of government. *St. Paul* ſays, *Let every ſoul be ſubject to the higher powers—for rulers are not a terror to good works, but to the evil—for he is the miniſter of God to thee for good—for he is the miniſter of God, a revenger to execute wrath*

wrath upon him that doth evil. St. Peter: *Submit yourſelves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's ſake; whether it be to the king, as ſupreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are ſent by him, for the puniſhment of evil doers, and the praiſe of them that do well.* And it appears from the hiſtory in the New Teſtament, that the Chriſtians had a benefit from the Roman magiſtracy at that time; otherwiſe they would have been deſtroyed by the rudeneſs of the common people, and the Jewiſh malice. But yet that ſome Chriſtians were in danger of pernicious notions of liberty, like the Jews of that time, is evident from what follows in the fore-cited context of *St. Peter: As free, and not uſing your liberty for a cloak of maliciouſneſs.* ver. 16. *St. Paul* writes, 1 *Tim.* ii. 1, 2. that *prayers ſhould be made for kings, and for all that are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godlineſs and honeſty*; or that we may, without diſturbance, profeſs the principles of true religion, and practiſe the ſeveral branches of piety and virtue; and certainly if Chriſtians deſire peace and tranquillity, and the protection of magiſtrates, they ought to be peaceable, and

behave as good ſubjects. Nor has the Chriſtian religion been prejudicial to civil liberty. Look abroad in the world: Have the people more right and privileges in Mahometan and Heathen governments and conſtitutions than in Chriſtian?

Obj. Hath Chriſtianity had a more real and extenſive influence than philoſophy? The beſt precepts cannot command attention and regard. A plain uſeful rule is wanted, that may be ſuited to the multitude.

Anſ. I. Since the publication of the Chriſtian religion, all immoralities have appeared more glaring and odious than in former times, which occaſions complaints of miſconduct and miſcarriages, that gave none, or little offence among Heathen people, though they were very common.

II. Men are always apt to complain of their own times, and make unfair compariſons between the ancient, and preſent or later times. They take the bright ſide of the former, and the dark ſide of the later, and ſo compare them together.

III. Chri-

III. Chriſtianity has had a real and extenſive influence (far beyond philoſophy) for reforming the manners, and promoting the happineſs of mankind. What miſeries did the people ſuffer in the Roman republic. How terrible were their triumvirates and their proſcriptions, and ſome other things at times, in an age as philoſophical and polite as any before it. How barbarous and ſhameful the Roman diverſions in the amphitheatre. 'Tis to Chriſtianity, which has aboliſhed ancient Heatheniſm, that Mahometans owe their better ſentiments. Chriſtianity has aboliſhed human ſacrifices, and obliged parents to bring up their children, which were formerly expoſed in *Greece* and *Rome* without mercy, and are ſo ſtill in Heathen countries. In the city of *Pekin*, ſeveral thouſand infants periſh this way annually. There is no ſuch thing among Chriſtians. If that number periſh in one city, how many thro' all the Chineſe empire, and this number counting on from year to year! Chriſtianity took with the common people, or the multitude, in the firſt and purer ages, and in a ſhort time, without the aid of civil

power, made a progreſs, gained ground againſt ſuperſtition, which philoſophy did not; had advantages of ſuperſtition, which philoſophy never had.

I have anſwered particular objections, I hope to ſatisfaction. I deſire leave to add ſome general obſervations.

Obſ. I. It cannot be thought ſtrange, that true religion, or a teacher of true religion, ſhould recommend great meekneſs, forbearance, and a contempt of riches and honours. Many wiſe men and philoſophers have ſeen, that there is neceſſity that good men bear and forbear; and they have ſaid great and fine things of the vanity of riches and honours, and ſuch like advantages. Indeed all earthly things deſerve little value, conſidering their uncertainty, and the ſhortneſs of human life.

II. Chriſtianity is reaſonable throughout, or, to uſe a modern phraſe, 'tis a republication of the law of nature, with the two poſitive appointments of Baptiſm, and the Lord's-ſupper or the Euchariſt. There-

fore all its precepts are to be taken in a reaſonable ſenſe. You are required to ſhew no more meekneſs than is fit and reaſonable in this world of ours; you may defend yourſelves, reſiſt, remonſtrate againſt all injuries, when you have any proſpect of advantage; you may go to law, if the thing you contend for be worth it, and you have a proſpect of ſucceſs. But to reſiſt, when you are in danger of periſhing in the attempt; to go to law, when the thing deſired will not repay the loſs of time, if gained that way; or to appeal to judges, when they are ignorant, or partial, and corrupt, what avails it? even though we have right, and the thing controverted be of ſome importance. The Diſciples were obliged to the greateſt exactneſs of behaviour, and to as much generoſity and ſelf-denial as any men: yet our Lord teaches them to be wiſe as ſerpents, as well as harmleſs as doves. *St. Paul* inſiſted on his privilege of a Roman citizen, as often as it would be of any ſervice. He humbled the magiſtrates of *Philippi*, and defended himſelf againſt the Jews to the utmoſt. In ſhort, the Chriſtian precepts ought to be underſtood, as they are defined to

be exactly ſuitable to men in the preſent ſtate of things.

III. *Though the Goſpel be allowed to be only a republication of the law of nature, 'tis of great advantage,* becauſe men through indolence, love of pleaſure, or ſome other means, did not trace out the great truths of religion, or the obligations of virtue, by the exerciſe of reaſon; and they needed to be awakened and excited to the practice of what they did know.

IV. True religion could not be diſcovered or recommended to men in a wiſer and more effectual manner, than it is, or has been, in the Goſpel of *Jeſus Chriſt*: or, there are the greateſt advantages attending the method in which true religion has been taught by *Jeſus Chriſt*. To have publiſhed the precepts of religion and virtue in a plain and clear manner, ſuppoſe, and with ſome few plain and clear reaſons, in the moſt ſolemn manner conceivable, as the ten commandments at *Mount Sinai*; together with plain and expreſs promiſes of future happineſs; would not have been ſo effectual as the

Goſpel method. And all the truths of religion, and precepts of happineſs and virtue, are better recommended and enforced by the example of *Chriſt*'s life, the patience, meekneſs, and fortitude of his death, and divine teſtimonie to the truth, and his after reſurrection, than by the fore-mentioned method, or any other I can think of. However, to this Goſpel method belongs (beſides what has been already mentioned) alſo the example of *Chriſt*'s Apoſtles.

V. 'Twas therefore fit, that the publiſher, or republiſher of true religion, with a commiſſion from heaven, ſhould publiſh it in ſome particular country, and, as a public preacher, be liable to contradictions, oppoſition, and all kinds of ſufferings, which paſſionate and prejudiced men might be diſpoſed to bring upon him; and no place or time could be more fit than the land of *Judea*, and the time when *Jeſus* appeared.

VI. It follows, that in order to underſtand true religion as publiſhed in the Goſpels, or the New Teſtament, men ſhould exerciſe their reaſon, and ſtudy the language,

dialect, and cuſtoms of the times, when *Chriſt* and his Apoſtles preached, of which times every one ſees plain indications in the New Teſtament itſelf. Therefore Chriſtian clergy, and people, ſhould endeavour to be as knowing as they can.

VII. I ſhall add but one thing more to the honour of the Chriſtian religion; that it is no enemie to learning, or any branch of ſcience, that I know of. All religion ſuppoſes men rational: the Chriſtian religion was publiſhed in a learned and a polite age. *St. Paul* often recommends to Chriſtians to have the underſtanding of men; he prays to God for them, that they may increaſe in knowledge. Every branch of learning has flouriſhed among Chriſtians. More of them, I believe, have underſtood a variety of languages, than any had done before. Natural philoſophie has been cultivated by them. In the early age of Chriſtianity, there were ſuch men as *Clement of Alexandria*, *Pantaenus*; *Julius Africanus*, *Origen*, with other learned men in the third century; *Euſebius* of *Ceſarea*, and *Jerom*, in the fourth; men acquainted with hiſtory, chronology,

criticiſm, never ſince ſuch in ſpirit; not to mention the many learned men of the later ages, untill the revival of learning in Chriſtendom, about the time of the Reformation*."

In 1739 was publiſhed another valuable pamphlet, *A Caution againſt Conformity to this World, two Diſcourſes on Romans* xii. 2: and in the very begining of the year 1740, *the fourth volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility.*

This year was a melancholy one to him, for *January* the 20th, he loſt his honoured father, in the 87th year of his age, with whom he had conſtantly reſided from the time of his leaving Lady *Treby*'s family†.

On

*The Editor is uncertain, whether this paper is, in every word, exactly tranſcribed, as the original is in ſome parts ſcarce legible.

† As it may, perhaps, be agreeable to ſome readers of theſe memoirs, to have a more particular account of the Doctor's father, I tranſcribe the following paper, drawn up by the Rev. Mr. *Daniel Neal.*

"The

On this mournful occaſion he remarks: "I "am full of grief, and find it very difficult "to

"The Rev. Mr. *Richard Lardner* was born at *Portſmouth*, *May* 28, 1653, and educated for the miniſtry, by the Rev. Mr. *Charles Morton*, of *Newington-Green*.

He entered upon his work in the year 1673, when he could have no other worldly proſpect, but bonds, impriſonment, and the loſs of all things, and which he was content to undergo, and accordingly had a large ſhare in the ſufferings of thoſe times for conſcientious nonconformity.

Having had early impreſſions of religion on his ſpirit, he joined in communion with the church, under the paſtoral care of the Reverend and learned Dr. *Owen*, whom he always mentioned with the profoundeſt reſpect and veneration to his death.

His firſt ſettlement was at *Deal* in *Kent*; but after ſome years, he removed to *London*, and ſome other places; in all which he was greatly beloved, and, as we have reaſon to believe, had many ſeals to his miniſtry, being made very uſeful for the converſion of ſome, and the edification of others, in the faith of the Goſpel.

He was a little man, but a bold and undaunted ſoldier of *Jeſus Chriſt*, being afraid of no dangers or difficulties in his maſter's work.

His manner of preaching was lively, maſculine, awakening like a ſon of thunder, and generally acceptable to the more ſerious part of his hearers, many of whom, and ſome yet alive, have dated their firſt impreſſions of religion from his miniſtry.

" to bear up under the affliction. I intreat
" the Lord Almighty to be my father and

It pleaſed God to continue him a great many years in his ſervice, till he might be juſtly eſteemed the father of all the nonconformiſt miniſters in *England*. He was a preacher of the Goſpel for near ſixty years, in all which time he was not only frequent, but fervent and unwearied in his work, till the providence of God, by a paralytick diſorder, put an end to his labours in the eightieth year of his age, but not to his life.

He was a cloſe walker with God, throughout the whole courſe of his long life, and always deſirous to be uſeful. When it pleaſed God to raiſe him a family, he was particularly careful, not only for the temporal, but ſpiritual welfare of his children, endeavouring to ſecure and promote it by frequent inſtructions, and importunate prayers to God for them; in all which we hope his labour was not in vain with regard to any of them.

In the laſt ſeven years of his life, he had the pleaſure of obſerving the goodneſs of God in the growing hopes of his poſterity, enjoying much peace and compoſure, while he endured the conſequences of his late diſorder with an uncommon patience and firmneſs of mind; till at length, it pleaſed God to releaſe him from the infirmities of this preſent life, to a better, *January* 17, 1740; in the 87th year of his age. So that it may be ſaid, in him have been fulfilled thoſe words in the book of *Job*, chap. v. 26. *Thou ſhalt come to thy grave in a full age, like as a ſhock of corn cometh in his ſeaſon.*

" protector,

" protector, to ſupport me, and to guide me " in the remaining part of my life, ſo as that " I may live to his praiſe and glory. I en- " treat and pray that he will enable me to " behave as a Chriſtian, and one perſuaded " of his fatherly care and protection; and " that this affliction may be improved by " me for my further humiliation and re- " pentance; for engaging in a cloſer depend- " ance on God; for quickening my pre- " perations for another and better world." And farther he writes: " I find this afflic- " tion ſit very heavy upon me. My deareſt " Brother, *Richard Lardner*, died in *April*, " 1733, ſome little time before I publiſhed " the firſt volume of the ſecond part of the " Credibility; the fourth volume of this " work was publiſhed but a few days be- " fore my father died."

Mr. *Hallet* of *Exeter*, writing to him at this time, thus expreſſes himſelf:

" Reverend and dear Sir,

I Am extreamly obliged to you for your favour of *January* 29, eſpecially as it was written under a very afflictive and melancholy

lancholy diſpenſation; afflictive indeed to nature: but faith looks higher, and adores the ſovereign grace that attends it. Your late good father is gone to heaven before you: and his God and your God is ſtill, and ever will be, with you. No doubt, you have often ſaid, with our Saviour, *I am not alone: for my father is with me.* It is my moſt earneſt prayer, that God will pleaſe to have mercy upon his church, and preſerve your invaluable life to be farther uſeful in it, to defend his holy religion, and to promote the practice of it! May Almighty God give you firmeſt ſtrength, and all abilities to finiſh the excellent work in which you are engaged, for his glory, and for the good of the Chriſtian world. And I pray the God of hope, to fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghoſt! Thus much I thought friendſhip required me to ſay: but it is not for me to exhort or admoniſh ſuch an elevated underſtanding, and ſuch improved virtue, as Mr. *Lardner*'s. I am ſure you can need no human help: you have help from the Lord your God, who made heaven and earth. Only

Only permit me to intreat you to take care of your precious health, and to uſe all needful exerciſe, that your life may be prolonged."

In *May*, this year, died alſo his valued friend and collegue, the Rev. Dr. *William Harris*; on which occaſion he preached, and afterwards publiſhed, *a funeral ſermon*.

Soon after Dr. *Harris*'s death, the congregation gave him an unanimous invitation to undertake the paſtoral charge, jointly with ſome other miniſter whom they ſhould chuſe; what were his determining reaſons for not accepting this invitation, or whether it was not agreeable to the gentleman who ſucceeded Dr. *Harris*, does not plainly appear. That he gave it due conſideration is evident from the following letter of the Rev. Mr. *Joſeph Hallett*'s.

June 23, 1740.

Reverend and dear Sir,

THE moſt important part of your laſt kind letter, has much employed my thoughts ſince I received it; and I have ſe-

rioufly

riouſly prayed the Father of lights to direct you in this weighty affair. As you have condeſcended to aſk my opinion, gratitude and friendſhip oblige me to give it. In order to this, I have, to the beſt of my power, balanced the reaſons *pro* and *con* againſt each other. I think, I ſee good reaſons, why you ſhould accept of the invitation which the church has unanimouſly given you. But the queſtion is, whether there are ſtronger reaſons on the other ſide to determine you not to accept it? Upon the moſt impartial examination, I muſt beg leave to declare, that I think there are *not*. The light in which I put the caſe, is this, *viz.* It is moſt fit and reaſonable, that you ſhould be a Paſtor, provided you are *qualified* for it. Now, I am ſure, that all mankind will agree, you are. The circumſtances, which you think diſqualify or unfit you are, *want of ordination, deafneſs, writing*. The firſt is eaſily removed. You can be ordained: and your ordination will the leſs hinder you from your ſtudies, becauſe I ſuppoſe at your age, there is no miniſter that would preſume to ſpend time in examining you, or be ſo formal as to require

quire you to ſtate a theſis, in order to try whether you have any underſtanding or learning. You are fitter to examine them. And all the world will laugh at thoſe that preſume to examine you. They have nothing to do but to recommend you to the divine bleſſing, after you ſhall have ſeriouſly declared, that you devote yourſelf to the work of the miniſtry.

Deafneſs is the next objection. But this will not interfere with your work as a Paſtor, much more than it does with your work as an aſſiſtant. I ſuppoſe you now ſometimes are called to viſit, and pray by the ſick; and can do the ſame hereafter. As to baptiſm, you can be ſure not to miſtake the *name* of the child, by deſiring to have the name before in writing; and if you cannot perfectly hear the parent or parents pronounce the word, *yes:* yet you can be ſatisfied of their doing ſo by common ſigns of conſenting, a bow, or a courteſy, which is often all the evidence which we, that can hear well, can have of their conſent. For people often will ſpeak very low.

Your

Your being engaged in writing is another objection: and I do own, that this cannot be anſwered, provided your taking upon you the Paſtoral office would be a *great* hinderance and interruption: but, as you are to have a copaſtor, I imagine it will not. You will not preach the more ſermons. The *adminiſtration* of the Lord's-ſupper will coſt you no more time than receiving it now does. Baptiſms will not be very frequent. Your copaſtor muſt be deſired to catechiſe the children, upon the account of your deafneſs; and in lieu of it you may expound the ſcriptures.

I long to hear, that you have acquired a larger concern in directing the affairs of a congregation than hitherto, and to have you appear at the Fund and other places as one of the chief, according to your real deſerts. I hope theſe things will give you very little more interruption than you have at preſent. I cannot, upon this view of things, avoid wiſhing that you will accept the offer. I pray God to direct you into that way, which will be moſt for his

his glory, your comfort, and the good of his church! I am,

Dear Sir,

Your affectionate Friend,
and humble Servant,
Joſeph Hallett, Jun.

However, in *November* this year, the Rev. Mr. (afterwards Dr.) *George Benſon*, was choſen ſole Paſtor, and Dr. *Lardner* continued aſſiſtant preacher.

In 1741 was publiſhed the third edition of *the firſt part of the Credibility*.

In 1743 *the fifth volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility*; alſo *the Circumſtances of the Jewiſh People, an Argument for the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion*; *three Diſcourſes on* Romans, chap. xi. 11; and a ſecond edition of *the Counſels of Prudence*.

This year he met with another family loſs in the death of his brother-in-law, the Rev. Mr *Daniel Neal*, M. A. and in 1744 he loſt an intimate friend, and diſtant relation by marriage, the Rev. *Jeremiah Hunt*, D. D.

D. D. on occaſion of whoſe death, he preached and printed *a Funeral Sermon, with brief Memoirs of his Life and Character.*

But under theſe afflictive diſpenſations of providence, he was enabled to bear up, and proſecute his large and important work; for in 1745 he publiſhed *the ſixth volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility:* beſides which, he this year, at the deſire of the family, reviſed and publiſhed *a volume of ſermons of the late Rev. Mr. Kirby Reyner of Briſtol.*

The beginning of the year, by the cordial and unanimous ſignature of the *Mariſchal-College* of *Aberdeen*, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor in Divinity, an honour, which though he thought it improper to ſolicit, he judged it his duty to accept when offered in ſo very obliging a manner. In his reflection upon it, he ſays, "I pray "God I may not be elevated by any accep-"tance my labours meet with, but that "I may proceed with humility, dili-"gence, and integrity, in the whole of my "life."

In

In *June*, 1746, he was appointed one of the correſpondent members at *London*, of the ſociety in *Scotland*, for propagating Chriſtian knowledge.

The ſeventh volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility was not publiſhed till 1748. This year he loſt his ſiſter, Mrs. *Elizabeth Neal*; on occaſion of whoſe death, he remarks: "I am the oldeſt of the three children which "God gave to my honoured parents. I am "ſtill preſerved: but now all worldly friend-"ſhips fade, and are worth little. I have "lately publiſhed *the ſeventh volume of the ſe-"cond part of the Credibility*: but a temper "and conduct worthie the doctrine of the "Goſpel, are more valuable than any written "defences and apologies for it, or explications "of it. I beg that I may be more and more "poſſeſſed of that temper of humility and "meekneſs which ſhall bear good fruits. And "I have great need to think much of ano-"ther world, and the change which I muſt paſs "under. I cannot expect, any more, ſuch ten-"derneſs and affection as have been ſhewn me "by my father, mother, brother, and ſiſter, "now no more in this world."

In 1750 was publiſhed *the eighth volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility*, and his firſt *volume of Sermons on various Subjects*.

The late Archbiſhop of *Canterbury* remarked upon the former of theſe in the following letter.

St. *James's Weſtminſter*,
December 6, 1750.

SIR,

IF I had not of late been more engaged in buſineſs than ordinary, I ſhould have returned you my thanks before now, for the kind and very acceptable preſent of your eighth volume. I have only been able, as yet, to take a curſory view of ſome parts of it: in doing which, I have been much pleaſed with your inſertion of that long citation, page 83, &c. with your diviſion of the ſorts of books, page 108, &c. and with your excellent reaſonings, page 124—137. As to the points, to which you occaſionally digreſs, page 19, &c. I agree with you entirely in cendemning all temporal puniſhments for any opinions, which are conſiſtent with the welfare of ſociety: all claims of ſubmiſſion to the judgment of church-

governors, whether ſeparate or aſſembled; excepting ſuch deference, as any one's diſtruſt of his own abilities, or learning, may reaſonably incline him to pay to guides ſet over him, whom he believes to be faithful and ſkilful: and laſtly, all terms of communion, which are not neceſſary articles of Chriſtianity, or indiſpenſably required by decency and order. What the terms, thus neceſſary and requiſite, are, all churches, and ſo far as they are concerned all perſons, muſt judge for themſelves: and there may be good and important reaſons to ſubmit, even without remonſtrating, to what we do not approve; provided we are not obliged to do any thing which we apprehend to be unlawful. He who thinks more things neceſſary, ſhould neither treat thoſe ill, who believe fewer, nor rank them with total unbelievers, nor entertain any harſher opinion of the future ſtate of either, than ſerious and calm enquiry directs him to. And on the other hand, he who believes fewer things to be neceſſary, ſhould not cenſure thoſe, who believe more to be ſo, as tyrannical or uncharitable; merely becauſe they dare not acknowledge him to be what, according to the beſt judgment they can form, he is not. The

former of theſe faults I admit to be the more common: but the latter is by no means without example, and ought to be conſcientiouſly avoided. The terms of admiſſion to the miniſtry may with reaſon, I think, be made ſtraiter, than thoſe of communion. For doctrines not neceſſary, may be very uſeful: and doctrines not deſtructive, may be very hurtful. And every church, both particular and national, hath much reaſon, both for its edification, and its credit, to deſire and endeavour to have teachers, who hold and will inculcate the former ſort, and not the latter. Still a diſcreet moderation ought to be carefully preſerved in this matter, not only to prevent hypocriſy, but for ſeveral other reaſons. And yet, ſurely the danger of tempting men to diſſemble, is no more a ſufficient objection againſt requiring ſome declaration, in this caſe, than in many that civil life preſents; where, however, I acknowledge, that this practiſe is carried much too far: nor perhaps is there leſs danger, both of diſſimulation and farther inconveniencies, in leaving every one to declare himſelf in his own forms, than in propoſing a form to be ſubſcribed. In either way, ſome will think more articles proper, ſome fewer. And thoſe of

greater latitude ſhould be mild in their opinions of thoſe who have leſs, as well as the contrary: and every one ſhould labour to reſtrain and ſoften thoſe, with whom he has weight. Otherwiſe, not only at ſometimes power may be oppreſſive, as it often hath been; but at others a ſpirit of liberty may degenerate into one of bitterneſs; I had almoſt ſaid of perſecution. I have run on into a long letter without deſigning it. In moſt, if not all, of what I have ſaid, I am perſuaded you will agree with me. But I am ſure you will excuſe me, if you ſee cauſe to think, as I hope you will, that the whole proceeds from a ſincere zeal for univerſal charity; and a firm belief that you have the promotion of it deeply at heart; on which account, yet much more than on that of your great learning, accuracy, and diligence, I am, with high eſteem

SIR,

Your very humble Servant,

Thomas Oxford.

To this Dr. *Lardner* anſwered:

Hoxton-Square, December 18, 1750.

My Lord,

I Am greatly indebted to your Lordſhip for the favour of your letter of the 6th inſtant, and think it no ſmall honour done me, that admidſt your many engagements you have read ſo large a part of my work. I have reaſon to be well pleaſed, that ſo many things in it have obtained your approbation. It affords me ſome ſpecial ſatisfaction that the reaſonings at page 124—137, have not been diſliked by your Lordſhip; becauſe I had flattered myſelf with ſome hopes, they might be approved by perſons of good judgment. I am likewiſe obliged to your Lordſhip for your free, candid, and charitable obſervations, relating to the firſt chapter of the volume. It is very natural to oppoſe that extreme which is moſt apt to prevail: there have been particular perſons, and ſome ſocieties, that have advanced and maintained great extravagancies; but oppreſſive power, on one ſide or other, has been very common, and produced extenſive miſchief. In the early ages, when catholics and heretics

tics contended with reaſons and arguments only, the juſter ſentiments uſually had the advantage, which cannot be ſaid of ſome later times.

I take this opportunity to congratulate your Lordſhip on your late preferment; which, though it adds nothing to your dignity, if it affords more leiſure, may open a new ſphere of uſefulneſs. And your Lordſhip, I hope, will think of making more public ſome of thoſe diſcourſes, which have been heard with ſo much attention and applauſe. If it may not be too preſuming, when I hear of your ſettlement at the deanery, I will order a volume of plain diſcourſes to be left there by the Bookſeller. I am

My Lord,

Your Lordſhip's

Moſt humble and obedient Servant,

N. Lardner.

The late Rev. Dr. *Doddridge* thus writes to him concerning theſe two volumes:

Northampton, May 23, 1751.

Reverend and dear Sir,

AS ſoon as ever I had the honour of receiving the valuable preſent you were ſo good as to ſend me, of the two volumes you publiſhed toward the cloſe of the laſt year, ſo elegantly bound, which I eſteem doubly as a memorial of the friendſhip of the learned, pious, and generous author; I deſired our good friend Mr. *Neal*, to preſent you with my moſt reſpectful acknowledgments, but deferred writing to you myſelf, till I had read them. I ſet about the Sermons immediately, and read three or four of them every week till I had finiſhed them; but having been ſomething interrupted by my journey to St. *Alban*'s, and the little additional labour of publiſhing good Dr. *Clarke*'s Funeral Sermon; after ſuch a delay, I waved writing to you, till I might have an opportunity of reading this laſt volume of the Credibility. But, really Sir, the labour of my Family Expoſitor, added to the other neceſſary buſineſs daily incumbent upon me, as a paſtor and tutor, with the neceſſity I have been under of anſwering letters, of which I have ſince laſt

Chriſtmas

Chriſtmas received between four and five hundred, has ſo entangled me, that it is but very lately I have been able to ſecure the pleaſure which that excellent volume had in ſtore for me. And now my journey is ſo near, that it may ſeem almoſt ſuperfluous to write to you; and yet, under the load of ſuch obligations to ſo worthy a friend, I cannot bear to ſee his face till I have made this poor acknowledgment of his goodneſs: accept it, dear Sir, with your uſual candour, and be aſſured, that though I am not able to expreſs it as I would, I do actually feel a conſtant and deep ſenſe of your goodneſs to me, and which is much more, of your continual readineſs to ſerve the public with thoſe diſtinguiſhed abilities, which God has been pleaſed to give you; and which have rendered your writings ſo great a bleſſing to the Chriſtian world. And I heartily pray they may be yet more abundantly ſo, for promoting the cauſe of virtue and piety, Chriſtian principles, and a Chriſtian temper. In the interpretation of particular texts, and the manner of ſtating particular doctrines, good men and good friends may have different apprehenſions; but you always propoſe your ſentiments with ſuch good-humour, modeſty,

candour,

candour, and frankneſs, as is very amiable and exemplary; and the grand deſire of ſpreading righteouſneſs, benevolence, prudence, the fear of God, and a heavenly temper and converſation, ſo plainly appears, particularly in this volume of Sermons, that, were I a much ſtricter Calviniſt than I am, I ſhould honour and love the author, though I did not perſonally know him. As to what you ſay of the council of *Nice*, I don't doubt but it will give umbrage to ſome who look on its decrees as the great bulwark of the orthodox faith; but I ſee nothing ſolid that can be objected to your remarks, and I think, there would have been much leſs Arianiſm in the world, and much leſs miſchief done by that which there is, if it had been conducted in that more catholic manner you deſcribe, as what might have been wiſhed; and I have never ſeen any good done by ſevere anathemas, and ſecular puniſhments, ſo awkwardly liſted into the ſervice of Chriſtianity, oppoſite as they are to its true genius. Neither my time nor my paper will allow me to enlarge, &c.

In

In the year 1751, the Doctor reſigned the place of morning preacher at *Crouched Fryers*; as he ſays in his letter to Dr. *Benſon*, on account of the continuance and even encreaſe of his deafneſs, the ſmallneſs of the morning audience, and the importance of redeeming time for carrying on his long work. On which occaſion Dr. *Benſon* writes to him: "I was ſo "much affected on *Monday* Evening, upon "reading your letter, that I had very little "ſleep that night: and my mind ſtill remains "greatly affected with the thoughts of part-"ing with you; for tho' I can't but own I "I feel the weight of your reaſons, yet I "muſt frankly tell you, I don't expect ever "to have an aſſiſtant, in whom I can place ſo "thorough a confidence, and for whom I "can entertain ſo warm an affection, and ſo "high an eſteem. I thank you heartily for "all your friendly, kind, and obliging treat-"ment of me, eſpecially ſince I came to "*Crouched Fryers*; and I earneſtly deſire that "our friendſhip may never be interrupted."

June 23 he preached his laſt ſermon, from 2 *Cor.* iv. 18, having been aſſiſtant there near twenty-two years.

The

The following extract from a letter wrote to Dr. *Lardner* in 1748, may convey ſome idea of him as a preacher.

" It has often grieved me to ſee ſo few perſons attend your public adminiſtrations; and puzzled me to aſſign a reaſon for it.

When I conſider the ſimplicity, propriety, and purity of your language; the juſtneſs of your ſentiments; the importance of the ſubjects you handle; the ſeriouſneſs and ſolemnity that animates every part of your performances; that you never meddle with any of the diſputable points that divide and alienate proteſtants; nay, have treated even Popery itſelf in ſuch a manner, as ſhews you to be indeed an imitator of the meekneſs and gentleneſs of *Chriſt*: what can be the reaſon? I can think of none but this; that there is ſome little imperfection in your ſpeech.

Your voice is naturally ſtrong, clear, and agreeable; but it is not difficult to percieve, in forming ſome ſounds, that the organs of ſpeech are weak. But I take this to be the leaſt part of the defect, which, from long and careful

careful obſervation, I think conſiſts in two things, *viz.* indiſtinctneſs, or ſlipping over now and then a word, or ſyllable; or running them too cloſe together, eſpecially at the end of a ſentence; and uſually at the ſame time lowering your voice: this is moſt remarkable in your prayer, leſs ſo in your ſermon, and ſtill leſs in your reading."

In 1752 was publiſhed *the ninth volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility*; and a ſecond edition of *the Circumſtances of the Jewiſh People*. In 1753, the *tenth volume of the ſecond part of the Credibillity*; and, *A Diſſertation upon the two epiſtles aſcribed to Clement of Rome, lately publiſhed by Mr. Wetſtein, with large extracts out of them, and an Argument ſhewing them not to be genuine*. This year alſo, he publiſhed, without his name, *An Eſſay on the Moſaic Account of the Creation and Fall of Man*. But the bookſeller, for whom it was printed, meeting with misfortunes, almoſt the whole edition was loſt.

In 1754 was publiſhed *the eleventh*, and, in 1755, *the twelfth and laſt volume of the ſecond part of the Credibility*.

Relating

Relating to the eleventh volume, the late Rev. Dr. *Henry Miles*, of *Tooting*, thus writes to him:

"I thank God, who has enabled you to finiſh your deſign in a collection of authentic teſtimonies, &c. for the ſervice of the Chriſtian cauſe, the benefit of which, the preſent generation and future ages will reap. The more I conſider the characters of the writers, cited by you, in the former, and this volume, the more am I ſatisfied you did right to bring your work down ſo far as you have done: thoſe who have been, or are otherwiſe minded, do not ſeem to me to have well conſidered the diſtance of time at which we are removed from the period to which your laſt volume reacheth; nor how far it was neceſſary to preclude the cavils and exceptions which our enemies, and their ſucceſſors, may be ready to make to the truths of the Goſpel Hiſtory; nor is it conſidered, *that the diſtance will be continually growing:* for my part (ſetting aſide the conſideration of your principal view) I cannot help looking upon it as a very uſeful and deſirable undertaking, if we regard it as a branch of eccleſiaſtical hiſtory; of which we have nothing

thing in our language that can render it unneceſſary; and moreover, if we conſider it as containing a variety of important inſtructions, which no careful reader can overlook, in the characters and conduct of the writers, mentioned by you—Sure I am, this leſſon all may naturally be taught; how abſolutely neceſſary it is for us to regard the inſpired writings as the rule of our faith and practice, and not the dictates or conduct of falliable men in former, or later ages."

About this time he was engaged with the Rev. *Dr. Samuel Chandler*, Dr. *John Ward*, and the Rev. Mr. *Edward Sandercock*, in peruſing, and preparing for the preſs, the poſthumous pieces of the late Rev. Mr. *Moſes Lowman*.

In 1756 were publiſhed the *firſt and ſecond volumes*, and in 1757 *the third volume, of the Suplement to the Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory*. Thus was he, contrary to his own expectation, ſpared to compleat, at thirty-three years from the beginning of it, this part of his uſeful and important work. I ſay, contrary to his own expectation; for in his letter of reſignation

to

to the Congregation at *Crutched Fryers*, he ſays, — "The credit and uſefulneſs of the "work depends on its being finiſhed, or how-"ever, brought down lower — it requires a "great deal of time, and cloſe application: "the remainder of my life, according to the "courſe of nature, will ſcarce ſuffice to finiſh "it. Of this I have been apprehenſive for "ſeveral years."

This year likewiſe, in conjunction with the Rev. Mr. *Caleb Fleming*, he reviſed, wrote a preface to, and ſuperintended the publication of, a poſthumous tract of the late Mr. *Thomas Moore*, intituled, *An Enquiry into the Nature of our Saviour's Agony in the Garden.*

In 1758 was publiſhed *the Caſe of the Demoniacs, mentioned in the New Teſtament: Four Diſcourſes upon* Mark v. 19, *with an Appendix for farther illuſtrating the Subject:* And, *A Letter to* Jonas Hanway, Eſq; *in which ſome Reaſons are aſſigned, why Houſes for the Reception of Penitent Women, who have been diſorderly in their Lives, ought not to be called Magdalen Houſes*; printed without his name. In 1759, alſo without his name, *a Letter writ in the*

year

year 1730, concerning the Queſtion whether the Logos ſupplied the place of a human Soul in the Perſon of Jeſus Chriſt *; *to which are added two Poſtſcripts; the firſt, containing an explication of thoſe words, the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God, as uſed in the Scriptures. The ſecond containing Remarks upon the third Part of the late Biſhop of Clogher's Vindication of the Hiſtories of the Old and New Teſtament.*

In 1760 he publiſhed a ſecond volume of *Sermons on various Subjects.*

About this time he reviſed, at the requeſt of the Rev. Mr. *Fleming*, the manuſcript of *a Criticiſm upon modern Notions of Sacrifices, being an Examination of Dr.* Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of the Atonement examined*: Alſo, at the Author's requeſt, he reviſed the manu-

* Mr. *Hallett*, with whom Dr. *Lardner* had exchanged ſeveral letters on this ſubject, but who was of a different opinion from him, thus concludes one of them.

"The conſideration of theſe matters is ſo far from "leſſening my friendſhip and regard for you, that I reve-"rence and eſteem you more than ever; and you ſhall "never find me ſay one word inconſiſtent with the "higheſt reſpect and friendſhip.—May God long pre-"ſerve your uſefulneſs!"

ſcript copy *of the true Doctrine of the New Teſtament concerning Jeſus Chriſt.*

In 1762 was publiſhed, *Remarks upon the late Dr.* Ward's *Diſſertations upon ſeveral Paſſages of Scripture, wherein are ſhewn, beſides other things, that* St. John *computed the Hours of the Day after the Jewiſh manner. Who are the Greeks?* John xii. *Who the Grecians?* Acts vi. *The Deſign of the Apoſtles Decree,* Acts xv. *That there was but one ſort of Jewiſh Proſelites: Wherein lay the fault of* St. Peter, *and how* St. Paul *may be vindicated.*

In 1764 was publiſhed, without his name, *Obſervations upon Dr.* Macknight's *Harmony of the four Goſpels, ſo far as relates to the Hiſtory of our Saviour's Reſurrection, in a Letter to the Author*; and the firſt volume of *Antient Jewiſh and Heathen Teſtimonies to the Truth of the Chriſtian Religion*; the ſecond volume in 1765; the third in 1766; and the fourth and laſt in 1767, which compleated another part of his extenſive plan.

Concerning the account of *Joſephus* in the firſt volume, Dr. *Chandler* wrote him the following letter. *Old*

Old Jury, December 4, 1764.

Reverend and dear Sir,

WHEN I received your propoſals, I determined to purchaſe the work immediately on its publication, but am extremely obliged to you for ordering it as a token of your reſpect to me, on whoſe friendſhip and eſteem I ſet, as I ought to do, the higheſt value. I have read the whole through with care, and to my great ſatisfaction and improvement. The only thing in which I am not fully ſatisfied, is your opinion about the teſtimony of *Joſephus* concerning our bleſſed Saviour, which I have always been inclined to think, as to the far greateſt part of it, genuine. I have not time to anſwer all the objections that are urged againſt the genuineneſs of the teſtimony, but you will give me leave to make two or three obſervations on the teſtimony itſelf.

I. That 'tis introduced with great propriety, as what happened under *Pilate*'s adminiſtration, and as what was one occaſion of the diſturbances amongſt the Jews in his time.

He teſtifies that *he was a wiſe man.*

Is uncertain *whether he was not ſomething more than a common man*, which is the meaning of the words, ειγε ανδρα αυτον λεγειν χρη; for *Joſephus*, upon Jewiſh principles, could not but think him a man, though he was uncertain whether he was not ſomewhat greater; a more extraordinary perſon, than any mere man.

And your own quotation from *Joſephus*, about *Moſes*, that *he was a man ſuperior to his own nature*, page 158, accounts for the character given to *Jeſus*.

He ſays he was παραδοξων εργων ποιητης. That, the Jews themſelves, his contemporaries and enemies, acknowledged. *Mat.* xiii. 54.—xiv. 2. *&c.*

He was a teacher of ſuch men as received the truth with pleaſure. You aſk, would he call the Chriſtian religion the truth? Yes certainly, as to the moral precepts of Chriſtianity; which is all, I ſuppoſe, that *Joſephus* knew or regarded of it. *Mat.* xxii. 16.

He drew over to him many Jews and Gentiles. This was true in the time when *Joſephus* wrote.

I refer you to page 169 of your own excellent work, which juſtifies the expreſſion.

This was the Chriſt. Ο Χριστος ουτος ην. I render the words, *This, viz. Jeſus, was the famous,* or remarkable *Chriſt. Jeſus* was a common name, and would not have ſufficiently pointed him out to the Greeks and Romans. The name by which he was known to them was, *Chreſtus,* or *Chriſtus*; as, in *Suetonius* and *Tacitus*; and if *Tacitus* had read *Joſephus,* as you juſtly think he had, I imagine he took this very name from *Joſephus. Joſephus* did not certainly believe him to be the *Meſſiah,* and therefore, when he wrote this hiſtory, he could never mean by *Chriſtus* the Jewiſh *Meſſiah,* of which the Greeks and Romans knew nothing; but that he was the remarkable *Chriſt,* who was the founder of that people who were called Chriſtians. This appears to me to be the real meaning of the expreſſion, and as ſuch it was intelligible to the Heathens.

In the period that follows: when *Pilate at the inſtigation, &c.* to the words, *did not ceaſe to adhere to him*; the whole is true, and what

might be ſaid by any man, though not a Chriſtian, who was acquainted with his hiſtory.

The next words, *for on the third day, &c.* if he ſpeaks only of what were the common ſentiments of his followers, they may be allowed to be his. But to ſpeak my mind freely, I think them rather an interpolation of *Euſebius*, or ſome other Chriſtian; and that the connection in *Joſephus* runs thus.

They who before had conceived an affection for him, did not ceaſe to adhere to him; and the ſect of Chriſtians, ſo called from him (the Ο Χρίϛος) *ſubſiſts to this day.* Such an addition he could not well avoid.

As to the remarks on the expreſſion των Χρίϛιανων φυλον, that φυλαν is here put for *ſect*, or muſt neceſſarily ſignify *ſect*, I am not thoroughly clear in it. *Joſephus* certainly uſes the word φυλον frequently for nation, but I think alſo ſometimes with greater latitude. Thus in a quotation from *Strabo*, he tells us, τοπον ουκ ἐϛι ραδιως ευρειν της οικουμενης, ὡς ου παραδεδεκται τουτο το φυλον, not *this nation*, which is too extenſive, but as it is in the Latin verſion,

verſion, *hoc genus hominum.* line 14. cap. 7. page 695. I alſo find in *Dion Caſſius*, τῆς βελευτικῆς φυλῆς γεγενημένης. *Qui ſunt ſenatoria origine.* Vol. 2. page 912. Edit. Reimari. Φυλον. ἔθνος, γενος. *Heſychias.* Why then may we not render the words in *Joſephus*, Χριϛιανων φυλον, *the ſort of people called Chriſtians.* And I think 'tis not unlikely that *Joſephus* ſhould add, *that they ſubſiſted to his own time* when he wrote this hiſtory, A. C. 93.

Give me leave juſt to add, that this paragraph, concerning *Jeſus*, doth not ſeem to me, ſo much to interrupt the courſe of the narration as is complained of: it is introduced under the article of *Pilate*, and placed between two circumſtances which occaſioned diſturbances. And was not the putting of *Jeſus* to death, and the continuance of the Apoſtles and Diſciples after him, declaring his reſurrection, another very conſiderable circumſtance, which created very great diſturbances? And though *Joſephus* doth not expreſsly ſay this, and perhaps had good reaſons for not ſaying it, yet he intimates it, by placing it between the two cauſes of commotion, by giving ſo honourable a teſtimony to *Jeſus*, and telling us, that he

was crucified at the inſtigation of the chief perſons of the nation. It would ſcarce have been decent in him to have ſaid more on this head.

I have ſometimes thought that this paſſage was originally in *Joſephus*, and that *Joſephus* himſelf omitted it afterwards in ſome other copies, at the deſire of ſome of his own nation, as containing too honourable an account of *Jeſus*, or that they falſified ſome other copies by omitting it; and I think, as you allow, with great reaſon, his teſtimony to the Baptiſt to be genuine, 'tis not to be accounted for, that he ſhould wholly omit to ſay any thing of *Jeſus*.

But I beg your pardon for giving you the trouble of ſo long a letter, eſpecially as what I have urged may appear to be of little weight. I own I cannot wholly give up the paſſage, and yet I feel the weight of your objections againſt it. Your book will ever remain a ſolid proof of your learning, candor, and good judgment; and I pray God continue your life till you have finiſhed your deſign,

deſign, and every other view for the ſervice of religion. I am, with the ſincereſt affection and eſteem,

Reverend and dear Sir,

Your greatly obliged, and
moſt humble Servant,

Samuel Chandler.

To this Dr. *Lardner* anſwered:

Reverend and dear Sir,

I Am much obliged to you for your friendly and valuable letter of *December* 4, and for all your arguings therein upon the ſubject: which you have urged with great force, and to the beſt advantage: and I will further conſider. In the mean time, you may be ſenſible, that I cannot be eaſily moved from an opinion, which I have long held agreeable to the ſentiments of very judicious critics.

The teſtimonies of *Joſephus* to the fulfilment of our Saviour's predictions in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, is invaluable. His accounts of the ſtate of things in *Judea*, before the commencement

commencement of the war, and during the miniſtry of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, are alſo very valuable, indeed above all price, But I do not perceive, that we at all want the ſuſpected teſtimony to *Jeſus*, which was never quoted by any of our Chriſtian anceſtors before *Euſebius*. Nor do I recollect that he has any where mentioned the name, or word, *Chriſt*, or *Meſſiah*, in any of his works, except the teſtimony above-mentioned, and the paſſage concerning *James the Lord's brother*. If you recollect any place, where *Meſſiah* is mentioned by him, let me know it. If that word is never to be found in him elſewhere, he muſt have deſignedly and ſtudiouſly declined it; for he had many occaſions to mention it. It therefore is unlikely, he ſhould produce that word in ſpeaking of *Jeſus*. Explain the term as you pleaſe, it muſt be unaccountable, that it ſhould be brought in here: this, I now mention to you. But, as before ſaid, I will further weigh your reaſons.

You ſeem to be well acquainted with an argument propoſed in a Diſſertation, &c. publiſhed at *Oxford* ſome years ago, and aſcribed to Dr. *Nathaniel Forſter*. I ſhall be obliged to you,

you, if you have leiſure, to inform me whether that Dr. *Foſter* be ſtill living, and what are his preferm nts: if he be dead, what was his ſtation, and of what other works was he author. For poſſibly I may be obliged publickly to make ſome remarks upon his diſcourſe. If I do, a farther acquaintance with the writer of it, will be expedient. For there have been ſeveral of that name, *Foſter*.

Wiſhing you continued ſucceſs in your ſtudies and publick labours, I remain, with the ſincereſt regard,

Your Friend and Servant,

December 31, 1764. *N. Lardner*,

P. S. I am obliged to you for the honour which you have done me and my volume in reading it through.

In the remaining part of his work, *the Hiſtory of the Heretics of the firſt two Centuries, with an Account of their Opinions, and what Books of the New Teſtament were received by them*, he had made ſome conſiderable progreſs; but it is doubtful whether ſufficient for it to appear to the publick,

publick as the work of ſo learned and accurate a writer, who, forty years from his firſt entrance on this laborious taſk, and at the age of 83, wrote with as much elegance and vigour, as in the firſt volume of the Credibility; and perhaps there are few who have ever expreſſed themſelves with more candour, or are equal to him in accuracy. Every thing he publiſhed was well weighed and digeſted, and he ſeems, by his papers, never to have ſet down to write upon any ſubject, till he apprehended he had made himſelf fully maſter of it, by a due and mature conſideration, and examination; ſo that upon comparing his firſt and laſt tranſcripts of any work, the only difference ſeems to be a greater accuracy of ſtile in the latter; and it may be ſaid without flattery, his ſtile was peculiarly ſimple and elegant,

He maintained a large correſpondence both in *Great Britain* and foreign parts, particularly in *America* and *Germany*; and as ſeveral of his works were tranſlated into the *German* language*, he was well known by character there,

* The firſt part of the Credibility was tranſlated into Low Dutch, by the Rev. Mr. *Cornelius Weſterbean*, of *Utrecht*,

there, and generally viſited by learned men, who came from thence. Many letters were ſent

Utrecht, and publiſhed there 1730; into Latin, by the Rev. Mr. *John Chriſtopher Wolfius*, and publiſhed at *Bremen* 1733; into German, by the Rev. Mr. *David Bruhn* of *Memel* in *Pruſſia*, and publiſhed (with a large preface, by the Rev. Profeſſor *Siegmund Jacob Baumgarten*); at *Berlin* and *Leipzig* 1750; and the *Dutch* and *German* tranſlators made ſome progreſs in the ſecond part, the *German* tranſlation being carried on as far as the fourth volume, which was publiſhed in 1751.

Of the Low Dutch tranſlation, ſome judgment may be formed from the following letter of Dr. *Lardner* to Mr. *Weſterbean*.

"Sir, I have received from you by the conveyance of my honoured friend, Mr. *Loftus*, the acceptable preſent of the Dutch tranſlation of the Credibility of the Goſpel Hiſtory. I entreat you to believe, that I am extremely ſenſible of the honour you have done me in tranſlating that piece into your language. I have, with the aſſiſtance of a friend, read over a part of your tranſlation, together with your learned notes. And ſo far as I am able to judge, you have uſed a great deal of care and exactneſs, and have repreſented my ſenſe to advantage. 'Tis no ſmall happineſs that my thoughts have been thus ſet before Foreigners, by a man of learning and judgment.

I ſhall not trouble you with any particular remarks on your notes. I perceive, that, though we differ in ſome few things, a part of your notes is deſigned to confirm, with new proofs, what I have advanced. I ſhall only ſay,

ſent him, expreſſive of the greateſt thankfulneſs for the friendly reception, and kind aſſiſt-

ſay, therefore, that I think your notes of both kinds an additional honour to me, in that, you have not only been at the pains of a juſt and accurate tranſlation, but have alſo advanced this work with learned remarks of your own. And I heartily rejoice in the advantage the Dutch reader will hereby have above the Engliſh.

The honour you have done me ought to be a new encouragement to undergo the labour of finiſhing this work. I wiſh I could tell you the ſecond part is in great forwardneſs. But I find I have engaged in a deſign of conſiderable compaſs and difficulty, which cannot be brought to perfection in a ſhort time, nor was I inſenſible of this at the beginning. I intend, however, to carry it on as faſt as the nature of the work, and my other engagements, will permit. And when it is finiſhed, I ſhall think myſelf obliged to convey it to your hands by the firſt opportunity.

In the mean time, I have ſent you a ſmall piece which I have ſince publiſhed in a controverſie concerning the Miracles of our Saviour, which I humbly entreat your acceptance of.

I am, Sir,

Your moſt obedient humble Servant,

London, June 30, 1731. *N. Lardner.*"

The Vindication of the three Miracles was alſo tranſlated into German, by the Rev. Mr. *Meyenberg*, and publiſhed (with a preface by the Rev. Dr. *Pleſken*,) at *Zelle*, in 1750. A tranſlation *of the Circumſtances of the Jewiſh People, &c.* at *Halle*, in 1754; and of *the Caſe of the Demoniacs, &c.* at *Bremen*, in 1760.

ance he gave ſuch gentlemen during their reſidence here. Many works were ſubmitted to his judgment by his friends in town and country before publication, on which he always gave a fair and candid opinion; of ſeveral he undertook the correction, and of ſome, even the care of the publication. Being himſelf deſirous of taking the opinion of thoſe he eſteemed the beſt judges on critical and other difficulties that occured in his own works, he was ever ready to give the ſame aſſiſtance to others.

As he lived very retired, eſpecially the latter part of his life, he engaged in very few publick things; however, as a private man, he was always ready in every good and benevolent work, affording his aſſiſtance, according to his ability, to thoſe in diſtreſs. He was particularly ſerviceable to the gentleman who came to *London* in the year 1756, to ſolicit the contributions of the well diſpoſed, towards building a church for the Proteſtants of *Thorn*, both by his advice and recommendation, on which account he afterwards received the thanks of the Preſident and Fellows of the College, for managing that affair, in an elegant Latin letter. At the time of his deceaſe he was engaged in aſſiſting

aſſiſting and recommending the Rev. Mr. *Finman*, miniſter of the Reformed Congregation at *Butzow*, in the Dutchy of *Mechlenburg Schwerin*, who came over for a like purpoſe; on which occaſion he received a letter from his Grace the late Lord Archbiſhop of *Canterbury*, which being the concluſion of a very long correſpondence between two ſuch eminent perſons, in very different ſtations, and ſo near the time of both their diſſolutions, may properly be preſerved here.

Good Dr. *Lardner*,

I Would have ſeen Mr. *Finman*, and anſwered your firſt letter, if I had been able. But it hath pleaſed God to afflict me for many months paſt, with ſo conſtant, and ſo ſevere a pain in one of my hips, that I am almoſt incapable of any attention to any thing elſe. Become quite helpleſs, and nearly worn out, I beg you will pray God to give me patience, and ſuch degree of eaſe as he ſhall think fit: and can only add, that as I hope my ſpirit is truly Chriſtian towards all who love the Lord Jeſus in ſincerity, ſo I am with particular eſteem

and

and thankfulneſs for the whole of your obliging behaviour to me through life.

Your faithful Friend and Servant,

Lambeth, July 13, 1768. *Thomas Cant.*

Other inſtances of Dr. *Lardner*'s benevolent diſpoſition, and deſire of being uſeful in his day, and generation, which it may not be improper to mention, are, his continuing a preacher at *Crouched Fryers* upwards of twenty-one years, without any view to temporal advantage: for, though the labourer is worthy of his hire, the ſalary raiſed for him was very inconſiderable. And his works, ſo juſtly eſteemed and admired, were carried on at his own expence, and never to his gain. The only copy-right he parted with, was that of the Credibility; for which, thirty-three years labour, and all the then remaining printed copies of that work, he received 150*l.* a ſum far leſs than he had laid out on them; hoping, as appears by his letters, that the work would be rendered more extenſively uſeful when it became immediately the intereſt of the Bookſellers to promote the ſale.

He was of a middling ſtature, rather thin than corpulent, of a chearful diſpoſition, and healthy conſtitution; polite in his behaviour, and to the laſt attentive to all points of reſpect, civility, and decorum, towards every one he converſed with; and ſeemed carefully to obſerve the rules laid down in his Counſels of Prudence.

His idea of religion cannot be ſo well explained as in his own words in part of a letter to the late Lord *Barrington*.

"I have ever had a good deal of curioſity, which, I apprehend, uſually accompanies a love of truth. But I have learnt a neceſſity of reſtraining, or at leaſt of regulating and governing that curioſity. The capacities of men are limited, and even ſmall in compariſon of the whole compaſs of things. The moſt important matters ought to be firſt preferred. A few certain principles are better than a great many, if only obſcure and uncertain. When evidence is not full and clear, 'tis beſt to ſuſpend and doubt. Religion is the concern of all men; it ought therefore be clear and plain. And obſcure religion is of little or no value: indeed,

it

it ſeems to be one of the greateſt abſurdities that can be conceived. If God make a revelation, intended for the general benefit of mankind, one would expect it ſhould be clear. We find in the Old Teſtament predictions of a diſpenſation, under which men ſhould not need to teach one another, ſaying, *Know the Lord: for all ſhould know him, from the leaſt to the greateſt.* I have a ſtrong perſuaſion that the Goſpel was plain at firſt. It is contained in the four Goſpels and Acts, which are plain books. If Chriſtianity is not plain now, I apprehend it muſt be our own fault, ſome way or other. A doctrine that contains plain directions of duty, and plain promiſes of a reward, ſufficient to encourage to duty in all circumſtances, to ſtrengthen againſt temptations, to give comfort under afflictions, to calm the affections, and can be eaſily proved to be certain, is indeed an excellent doctrine. This is true religion. This is a pearl of great price, a treaſure indeed, for which a man may reaſonably part with all that he has to buy it. I ſay, eaſily proved to be certain. But it requires a ſincere and honeſt diſpoſition. Such a mind, with good inſtruction, will learn more in a few hours, than the prejudiced and ſelfiſh, in an age. In-

deed, ſuch as theſe can never receive the truth, unleſs mixed with other matters that ſubvert it.

I am the more diſcouraged in the purſuit of ſpeculations in matters of religion, becauſe I obſerve our bleſſed Saviour (who knew all things) and his Apoſtles enter not into many particulars of the future life, and deliver no abſtract notions about any thing, nor ſay any thing whatever to gratify mere curioſity, but only matters of the utmoſt conſequence to the happineſs of men. I have alſo obſerved, that the obſcure and difficult principles of the philoſophers, the great variety of opinions they had, and the uncertainty of them, were great defects in their philoſophy, and objections againſt it. And I have been not a little concerned to ſee the ſtate of Chriſtianity among us reſemble ſo much the ſtate philoſophy was in at the time the Chriſtian religion firſt appeared in the world. There is ſtill the more reaſon for thoſe who ſincerely deſire the intereſt of religion, to keep to plain, certain truths, if poſſible; becauſe of the prodigious, the almoſt univerſal indolence of mankind, who continually catch at every thing, that may countenance their neglect of enquiry

enquiry and examination; who ſeek nothing but this world, how they and their families may enjoy eaſe, riches, and grandeur. For all which reaſons, it may be beſt not to advance any obſcure and uncertain matters in religion; or, if for ſome ſpecial reaſons they are advanced, that they be propoſed as uncertain and doubtful, and that little ſtreſs be laid upon them."

In a ſubſequent letter, he thus writes:

"A principal occaſion of my writing as I did about curioſity, was (as far as I remember) the ſubject matter of debate or enquiry, the future reward of good men. I apprehend ſome ill conſequences from too nice and curious enquiries about that, ſince God has not plainly revealed to us, as I ſuppoſed, the place of that happineſs. But whatever I ſaid about curioſity, I never intended to diſcourage a diligent and careful ſearch after truth, There is ſcarce any thing more diſagreeable and offenſive to me, than the common indolence of mankind about religion, and truth in general. And therefore another reaſon, why I ſpake againſt needleſs enquiries, was, becauſe I feared that

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the rendering religion abſtruſe and difficult, and multiplying queſtions in divinity, (eſpecially in thoſe things which are of importance) might be improved by mankind, as a pretence to countenance their lazy and indolent diſpoſition."

Dr. *Lardner* never married. He reſided the greateſt part of his life in *Hoxton-Square*; and continued in the perfect uſe of all his faculties, except his hearing, in a remarkable degree, till the time of his death, which happened *July* 24, 1768, in the 85th year of his age, after a ſpeedy decline of but a few weeks, at *Hawkherſt*, the place of his nativity; where he had a ſmall parental eſtate, at which he intended to have ſpent ſome days, with the hope that change of air, and relaxation from ſtudy, might have been of ſervice to him. His remains are depoſited about the middle of the north-ſide of *Tindal*'s Burying-ground. But, at his own particular requeſt, no ſermon was preached on occaſion of his death.

SERMONS

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ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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SERMON I.

The right Improvement of Time.

EPH. V. 16.

Redeeming the Time, becauſe the Days are evil.

WE find this advice twice given in St. *Paul*'s epiſtles: and in both places recommended as a branch of prudence and circumſpection. So it is here: *See then, that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe: redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.* And in like manner in the epiſtle to the *Coloſſians: Walk in wiſdom toward them that are without, redeeming the time.* Col. iv. 5.

Some expoſitors ſuppoſe, that the right improvement of time is the direct meaning and deſign

deſign of the expreſſion, as uſed in this place: and ſay, that "redeeming is a metaphorical "expreſſion, taken from merchants, who di-"ligently obſerve the fitteſt time for buying and "ſelling, and eaſily part with their pleaſure for "gain. So do you alſo deny yourſelves in "your eaſe and pleaſure, to gain an opportu-"nity for doing good." Again: "Time paſt, "ſtrictly ſpeaking, cannot be recalled. But "you are to *redeem*, or *recover*, as far as poſ-"ſible, that time which has been loſt, by a "double diligence in improving what re-"mains[a]."

Others think, that the proper meaning of the Apoſtle's direction is, that the Chriſtians to whom he is writing, "ſhould ſecure them-"ſelves, by a prudent carriage toward all men, "from the inconveniences of thoſe difficult "times, in which they lived:" or, "*redeem-*"*ing the time*; that is, gaining as much time "as you can, prolonging your own tranqui-"lity, and the opportunity of ſpreading the "Goſpel. Obſerve a prudent behaviour to-"ward unconverted Gentiles, and unbelieving

[a] Pool upon the place. The ſame upon *Col.* iv. 5.

"Jews;

" Jews; that they may be as little exaſpera-
" ted as poſſible by your different ſentiments
" from theirs, or by your pure and holy life,
" whereby you ſeem to condemn and reproach
" them[b]."

I ſhall however take occaſion from theſe words to diſcourſe of the right improvement of time, or *redeeming* it in a more general ſenſe. And I ſhall conſider them, as ſetting before us the ſame practice, which *Solomon* recommends: *whatever thy hand findeth to do*, whatever lies before thee, which is uſeful, or innocent, *do it with thy might*, with vigour and perſeverance: *for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wiſdom, in the grave, whither thou goeſt.* Eccl. ix. 10.

And indeed, if we were to ſuppoſe this exhortation connected with what precedes, we might be inclined to think, that the Apoſtle intended to ſtir up theſe Chriſtians to care and diligence in general, as well as to circumſpection in particular, and a prudent carriage toward

[b] Lock upon the place. To that purpoſe, Pierce upon *Col.* iv. 5.

thoſe who were of different ſentiments, for ſecuring and prolonging their tranquility, and keeping off thoſe evils, which ſome were inclined to bring upon them. This more enlarged, and general deſign of the exhortation may be argued, I ſay, from the context. Which, if we take it in more fully than we have yet done, is this: *Wherefore he ſays, Awake, thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee light. See then, that ye walk circumſpectly, not as fools, but as wiſe; redeeming the time, becauſe the days are evil.*

The right improvement of time ſeems to imply two things: Employing ourſelves in that which is good, and doing that good with care and diligence.

I. I ſhall therefore in the Firſt place ſhew, what things we ought to be employed in.

II. And then, Secondly, how we may beſt improve our time for thoſe good things that lye before us.

III. To which I intend to add, in the Third place, an exhortation.

I. The

I. The first thing to be considered by us is, in what things we ought to employ ourselves. Here I shall mention these several particulars.

1. *The service of God.* For God is the creator of all things, and their Lord and Sovereign. He it is, who gives us all things to enjoy. And in him we live and move and have our being. We breathe in his air, and tread on his earth, and live upon the provisions he affords us. Every moment of our time produces fresh instances of his bounty and goodness.

He is the great governor of the whole world, not of one part or portion only, but of the whole universe. And therefore he is able, and does direct and over-rule all things with a wise and almighty inspection and providence. A continued supply is made for us, and for all creatures in general. He also overrules the spirits of men, so that notwithstanding the unreasonable and exorbitant desires of many, their violence does not break forth to disturb the general peace and tranquility of the world: in which peace and tranquility we have

have our ſhare, and quietly enjoy ourſelves, our goods, and our friends.

We ſhould therefore very much employ our thoughts in admiring and adoring God; in praiſing him for his goodneſs, and in praying to him for the continuance of his favour and good-will, and for every thing neceſſarie to our comfort and happineſs.

Some time will be fitly ſpent in ſecret, in meditating upon his glorious perfections, in contemplating his great and wonderful works, and in recollecting the many benefits beſtowed upon us hitherto in the paſt ſtages of life.

And we ſhould allow ſome time for the united and public worſhip of God, which is an obligation founded in reaſon, and is preſcribed by revelation.

Can any of us think, we have well employed our time in this world, if we have never, or rarely with ſeriouſneſs and attention, thought of that Being, who is the moſt perfect, ſurpaſſing all the united perfections of the whole

creation: without whom nothing would have been, of whom are all things, and by whom they ſubſiſt?

2. We ought alſo to employ ourſelves, and improve our time, *in ſecuring and advancing our own ſpiritual intereſts.* We ſhould endeavour to know the ſtate of our own ſouls: what are our chief paſſions; what our greateſt temptations. It may require ſome time and care to form a right judgment of ourſelves. There ſeems to be good reaſon to ſay, that few men know themſelves. The heart is deceitful. Many deceive others; ſome miſtake, and are deceived about themſelves.

It may not be improper therefore to allot ſome time for this: to conſider, what is the bent of our mind, in what courſe we are, and whither it leads: and whether our behaviour is agreeable to our profeſſion and principles.

Our mind is ourſelves; and our chief care ought to be its culture and ornament. There is nothing of equal importance with this. When we remove hence, when death puts a period to our preſent ſtate of action and exiſtence,

ence, we leave behind us our eſtates and treaſures, we drop our titles, and all external ornaments. But we ſhall carry with us the ſame temper and diſpoſition, which we had here: and our works will follow us. Are we here unholy? We ſhall be hereafter lodged in the company of ſuch beings, who will be torments to themſelves, and tormentors to each other. Are we now proud? We ſhall then be abaſed. Are we humble? We ſhall then be exalted. Are we pure in heart? We ſhall then ſee God. Are we merciful? We ſhall then obtain mercy.

It is incumbent on us therefore to employ ſome time in conſidering the nature and obligation of thoſe virtues and diſpoſitions of the mind, upon which ſo much depends; to confirm ourſelves in the love and practice of them, and to watch againſt temptations, that might enſnare us, and carry us off from the courſe which leads to happineſs. It behoves us, as

2 Pet. i. 5, &c. St. *Peter* ſays, *to give all diligence, to add to faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, and to knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience, and to patience godlineſs, and to godlineſs brotherly-kindneſs, and to that charity: and to*

make our calling and election ſure. For, ſays the ſame Apoſtle, *if ye do theſe things, ye ſhall never fall. For ſo an entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto you abundantly into the everlaſting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.*

The obligation to theſe virtues ſeems not to lie far out of ſight. But might be ſoon diſcerned, if men would be perſuaded to attend, and to exerciſe their rational powers and faculties. However it is certainly obvious to all who are acquainted with the Chriſtian revelation.

The importance of ſecuring our eternal ſalvation is evident upon the firſt thought about ſuch a matter. But we are ſurrounded by temptations. The things of this world make ſtrange and ſudden impreſſions upon us, and carry us away, ſometimes, before we are aware. But he who frequently employs himſelf in conſidering the duties of his ſtation, and the reaſonableneſs of them, in obſerving the real excellence of holineſſe, and every branch of it, and impreſſing on his mind the motives and arguments there are to the practice of it, is

likely to be prepared for a time of temptation, and to ſtand and overcome in it.

Yea a few hours, at ſome one time, ſeriouſly employed in conſidering the duties of the preſent condition, and the vaſt moment of our behaviour in this world, with reſpect to another ſtate of endleſs duration, may be of great ſervice for ſecuring our choice and determination in favour of virtue. And having once found the benefit of ſerious conſideration, it is very probable we ſhall be diſpoſed to renew at ſome ſeaſons the like exerciſe and employment of the mind.

3. Another thing, in which we ought to employ ourſelves, is the *buſineſſe of our calling*. We are not to neglect that out of ſloth and idleneſſe, nor from a pretenſe of minding the things of the ſpiritual life, nor for the ſake of attending to the concerns of other men. For the buſineſſe of our calling is a main part of our duty, and a fundamental obligation, upon which every thing elſe depends. God has ſo formed us, that we have many wants, which are continually renewed upon us, and which,

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in dependence on divine providence muſt be ſupplied by our own induſtrie and care. What good reaſon have we to relye upon the charity of others, if we have ſtrength to provide for ourſelves? Or what right has he to the privileges of any community, who contributes nothing to its proſperity? Yea, what man, who has any ſpirit, would chooſe to depend upon others, who can ſubſiſt by his own ſkill? And what wiſe and good man would willingly receive that, for which he has given no valuable conſideration of care or labour?

I might inſiſt, that ſloth and idleneſs expoſe men to temptations of every ſort. But I chooſe rather to obſerve and ſay, that a man's weight and influence in this world muſt, for the moſt part, depend upon ſkill in ſome calling, and diligence in it: and that the very pleaſure of life is advanced thereby. How inſipid are amuſements to thoſe, who know not what labour either of body or mind is. Moreover, it is in itſelf very deſireable to have wherewithal to give to thoſe that need. Poor and indigent perſons there will always be in this world of ours. Some are left orphans in their childhood, before they can help them-

ſelves. Some labour under the decays of age. Other ſome experience the waſte and expenſe of continued ſickneſſe. Some are reduced by ſtrange and unexpected accidents. Some are unjuſtly plundered by violence.

He who by care and diligence, and a prudent improvement of his time, and the ſeveral advantages that have been put into his hand by the kind providence of God, has gained wherewithal to relieve and help any ſuch neceſſitous perſons, has good reaſon to rejoice. Which leads me to another particular.

4. Some time ought to be employed in ſerving others. Man is naturally a ſociable creature. The Chriſtian religion teaches us to conſider ourſelves, as members of one and the ſame body. It is a particular and expreſs direction of St. Paul: *Look not every man on his own things: but every man alſo on the things of others.*

Phil. ii. 4.

Some have perplexed and difficult affairs before them. And they want the aſſiſtance and the united counſels of others. If men of underſtanding carefully improve their time, and diſpatch

diſpatch their own affairs with diligence, they may have leiſure to adviſe, help, and ſolicit for others, in thoſe intricacies, in which they happen to be involved.

Some are weak through want of knowledge, or experience and credit in the world. And they are overpowered by men of ſuperior might, who are artful, and ſkilful in carrying on oppreſſive meaſures, and then ſecuring and defending themſelves by ſpecious pretences againſt the reſentment due to their unjuſt proceedings. Will it not be an act of great virtue, to afford ſome help to the weak cauſe, when upon good grounds we know it to be right? Among thoſe things which *Job* urges in his own vindication, he does not omit this part of his character: *I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was a father to the poor: and the cauſe, which I knew not, I ſearched out. I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the ſpoil out of his teeth.* Job. xxix 15—17

That is a grand performance. But it is reſerved for thoſe who have well improved their time in cultivating their own minds: and who

know how to diſcharge the incumbrances of their own affairs with expedition.

II. I now proceed to ſhew, how time may be beſt emproved in theſe good works, and for carrying on theſe good deſigns and purpoſes.

1. We are to do theſe things *with all our might*. What we do, or engage in, we are to be intent upon, in proportion at leaſt to its importance. If we are about our own work, in the buſineſſe of our calling; we are to mind it, and not be ſlothful therein: but to do it with diligence, that it may be diſpatched, and we may not be hindered from the ſervice of God, or our neighbour.

If we are engaged in the ſervice of God, we are to mind that, and not to ſuffer other things then to occupy our thoughts. Cold and indifferent ſervices will neither be acceptable to God, nor profitable for ourſelves. Do we think to obtain thoſe bleſſings, which we aſk but faintly? Will thoſe inſtructions do us any good, which we ſcarce regard, when given? Or, have thoſe inſtructors diſcharged their duty, who have propoſed indeed reaſonable admonitions,

admonitions, and weighty arguments, but without inward affection, or viſible zeal and concern; as if the things diſcourſed of, were indifferent, of little or no moment. It is no wonder, if the time allotted even to the worſhip of God, runs waſte, if we are unattentive and negligent.

So likewiſe, when you undertake any ſervice for another, you are to do it with all your might, as if it were your own. You are to ſtudy the moſt proper and effectual means of ſucceeding that can be thought of. Whatever good cauſe you eſpouſe, you are to do it heartily: for otherwiſe you betray, inſtead of promoting it.

2. Another way of improving time is to lay aſide as much as poſſible may be ſuch things as are trifling, unneceſſarie, and of ſmall moment; and to contract the number and length of our recreations. Hereby we gain more time for thoſe things, which are material and important.

It is true, the mind ought to be diverted, and cannot be always intent upon great mat-

ters. But we ſhould take care, that diverſions are not ſo indulged, as to unfit us for buſineſſe afterwards. This is the proper uſe and deſign of relaxation, to fit us better for things of weight. But ſome by giving way to amuſements and diverſions, by exceeding therein as to length of time, contract ſo light a habit, as to be diſguſted at every thing grave and ſerious.

The body too needs to be refreſhed by reſt. But, certainly, we were not born to ſleep only. And it has been often obſerved, that when that is indulged beyond the proportion, which nature requires, all the powers of the bodily frame, inſtead of being invigorated and ſtrengthened, are ſlackened and enervated.

3. Another thing, that will be of ſervice for improving, or redeeming time, is to lay hold of, and take the advantage of, opportunities.

Every one knows, that this is of great importance in commerce, and in all the affairs of life. There are likewiſe opportunities, or ſpecial ſeaſons for gaining religious knowledge, and

and advancing the good diſpoſitions of the mind. Such is the friendſhip and converſation of a ſerious, underſtanding and communicative Chriſtian. The Lord's day is an opportunity for our ſouls, as it is a day of reſt and leiſure from the cares and buſineſſe of this preſent life. It may be reaſonably ſuppoſed, that then, when we are diſengaged from other things, we may give a cloſer attention to thoſe inſtructions, which are propoſed to us in the public worſhip of God; and we may then likewiſe, eſpecially in private, without inconvenience, carry on our meditations to a greater length, than we can ordinarily do on other days.

There may likewiſe alſo be opportunities ariſing from the temper of our minds. Poſſibly we do at ſome ſeaſons, and in ſome circumſtances, perceive in ourſelves a more readie, or a more pliable diſpoſition, than at others. Theſe are ſpecial opportunities. We ſhould not let them ſlip, but by all means take the advantage of them for adjuſting maturely the great principles of reaſon and religion, upon which we are to act, and for ſettling in our minds a full perſuaſion of the vanity of this world and all its glories; and for confirming the reſolutions

tions of virtuous and holie obedience, which are juſt and reaſonable.

As there are ſuch reaſons as theſe, favourable to our own beſt intereſts, ſo opportunities may offer for the ſerving others; either for giving them advice and counſel, or reproof, or for interpoſing with other perſons in their behalf, and to their advantage.

4. It will be of great uſe for redeeming, or the right improving of time, to diſpoſe our ſeveral affairs and concerns in good order. This contrivance and diſpoſal of things may, itſelf, take up ſome thought and time, and ſeem to retard our progreſſe for the preſent: but it will be amply recompenſed afterwards. It will afford pleaſure, not to be conceived before-hand. All the perplexity of confuſion and diſorder will be avoided. And many things will be done and effected with eaſe, which otherwiſe would have been left undone, to our own great vexation, and the loſſe and detriment of others.

5. Time may be upon ſome occaſions wiſely redeemed by avoiding contention about trifling things, of little value.

This, I apprehend to be one reaſon, why our bleſſed Lord, in ſuch emphatical expreſſions, recommends to men to acquieſce, and ſit down contented under leſſer injuries and abuſes, rather than withſtand them, or ſeek ſatisfaction for them. *I ſay unto you, that ye reſiſt not evil: but whoſoever ſhall ſmite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other alſo. And if any man will ſue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak alſo. And whoſoever ſhall compel thee to go a mile, go with him two.* Mat. v. 39—41.

It is a point of prudence, as well as virtue, to paſs by leſſer offences. Better it is to loſe a ſmall ſum, than run the hazard of waſting a great deal in a long and tedious proſecution, which may never ſuccede at laſt. Or, it is better to let it go at once, without farther concern, than to ſpend time in the recoverie, which may be employed to more advantage another way.

The like may be ſaid, with regard to many other things, which are cauſes of ſtrife and difference among men. Begin not a ſtrife about trifles, leaſt you ſhould thereby be drawn into

a long and ruinous contention. The obſerving this rule may be of great and ſingular uſe on the point before us, of redeeming time.

6. Laſtly, Time is to be redeemed by a prudent, circumſpect, and inoffenſive behabiour toward all men. This is ſuppoſed to be what is particularly intended by the Apoſtle. If ſo, it is of near affinity with other directions elſewhere. *If it be poſſible, as much as in you lyes, live peaceably with all men.* And, *Give none offenſe, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God.* *Solomon*'s obſervation may be reckoned applicable here, as well as upon other occaſions: *A ſoft anſwer turneth away wrath, but grievous words ſtir up anger.*

Rom. xii. 18.

1 Cor. x. 32.

Pr. xv. 1.

In this way redeem time to yourſelves, for all the good purpoſes of life. In this way ſeek the prolongation of your peace and tranquility, by avoiding all needleſs offence and provocation, by mildneſſe and affability of diſcourſe, prudence of behaviour, meekneſſe of anſwer to all thoſe who enquire after your belief, and the grounds and reaſons it. By a readineſſe to good offices, watching your temper, guarding

againſt ſuch diſcourſes and actions, as are offenſive and diſagreeable to many about you, and which your peculiar principles do by no means oblige you to: Hereby, I ſay, do you redeem and gain time for the worſhip of God, for your own intereſts, and for the good of your friends, and indeed for every uſeful deſign, which you have at heart, and you are at all qualified for.

III. I beg leave to add, in the third place, as at firſt propoſed, a ſerious exhortation, which ſhall conſiſt of two parts. Firſt, an addreſs to perſons of different ages, ſtations, and characters: and then, Secondly, ſome conſiderations, by way of motive and argument.

1. Let me ſay ſomewhat by way of counſel and advice upon this ſubject, to perſons of different ages and characters.

Are any ſtill in a ſinful courſe, and under the power of evil habits? Do any daily add ſin to ſin? They do ſomewhat worſe than barely waſte time. For they employ it to bad purpoſe.

Are

Are there any who have not yet ſincerely devoted themſelves to God, with full purpoſe of heart, to ſerve and obey him? There is ſomewhat yet undone, which muſt be done, or you are miſerable beyond redreſſe. Be perſwaded to take ſome time to conſider the courſe you are in. Probably, you will then ſee reaſon to alter it, and enter upon a new way of life. *I thought on my ways*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and turned my feet unto thy teſtimonies. I made haſte, and delayed not keep thy commandments.*

Pſ. cxix. 59, 60.

They who have devoted themſelves to God in *Chriſt Jeſus* may do well to conſider, that their engagement to be the Lord's, implies an obligation to ſerve him with all their might. Good habits ought to be improved and ſtrengthened. You are to glorify God with your ſoul and your body, which you have conſecrated to him. You ought to ſtir up and awaken men to attend to the great things of religion, and their moſt important concerns. You are to invite and draw as many as you can into the paths of virtue and holineſſe. So your time of life will be well employed: and in the end you

you will receive from the Lord, whom you ſerve, a very abundant reward.

Young perſons may percieve from what has been ſaid, how great an advantage may be made by an early dedication of themſelves to God. You are in, or approaching to, the beſt part of life. Have you no deſire, that it may be employed to ſome good purpoſes? Is it not a pity, that the world and you ſhould loſe your beſt time, and all the vigour of and activity of your higheſt powers?

Improve then the early days of life in preparatorie ſtudies and labours for future uſefulneſſe: that you may be qualified to diſcharge the duties of your ſtation with reputation and credit. How great is their happineſſe, if they know how to improve it, whoſe parents furniſh them with the beſt helps for knowledge and wiſdom, ſecular and religious, and who conſtantly watch over their conduct, and quicken and encourage their purſuit of every thing excellent and laudable! Great likewiſe is their privilege, who, when their neareſt relatives are ſtraitened, are kindly forwarded and aſſiſted by others of generous minds, who liberally afford them all

proper

proper helps for attaining the knowledge, ſuited to their rank and condition. Theſe are accountable for ſuch a privilege, and ſhould improve the time allotted for attaining that ſkill and ſcience, which may enable them to live comfortably in the world.

Are you in years? Have you paſſed the morning and noon of life? and are you drawing toward the very evening? And has all that time been waſted? It is time to think and conſider, and take care to improve what remains. This every one muſt be convinced of. But perhaps ſome may be apt to deſpair of doing any good now. To ſuch I would ſay: that regard for time paſt and loſt, ſhould not by any means exceed ſo far, as to prevent the improving of what is left. As yet you have an opportunity. Nature may be impaired. But then, poſſibly, you have fewer avocations. And ſome temptations, that were ſtrong, have loſt their force. Endeavour then to do this good at laſt, by immediate care and diligence in the great work and buſineſſe of this life, the ſervice of God, and ſerious preparations for another world, to leave behind you the teſtimonie of a full conviction, that after having tried the ways of ſin, the way

way of holineſſe and virtue is to be preferred.

Are you rich, and exalted in this world? You are by your condition diſcharged from many of the low offices of life, which are performed for you by others. You may therefore employ yourſelves in things of a higher nature: in contemplating the works of creation and providence, in ſtudying the principles of natural and revealed religion. So you may furniſh your minds with a rich treaſure of delightful and uſeful knowledge. And you may have opportunities of communicating excellent inſtruction to thoſe, whoſe mean employments hinder their making many reflections for themſelves. Or, you may aſſiſt, direct, relieve, ſuch as are in want and perplexity.

Are you poor? By that condition of life you are eſpecially neceſſitated to redeem time by aſſiduity and diligence in your calling. Sloth and idleneſs would throw you into want and diſtreſſe: and at the ſame time diſhearten others from giving you relief.

Diligence is one of the proper virtues of your ſtation, and the chief merit you can attain to. It will therefore recommend you to the regard of others, and induce them to lend you their helping hand for your ſupport: eſpecially, if, notwithſtanding your beſt care, you ſhould come into any remarkable ſtraits and difficulties: whereas, if, whilſt you are in poor and low circumſtances, you are idle and unactive, by this demonſtration of a worthleſs mind, at leaſt a very great defect of virtue, you check the charity even of thoſe who are of a kind and benevolent diſpoſition.

And let me obſerve, that as the nature of your condition very much engages your time and thoughts in providing the neceſſaries of life: you ought moſt carefully to improve the reſt of the Lord's day for the concerns of your ſouls and another life.

II. Having mentioned theſe advices and counſels, I ſhall now conclude all with ſome conſiderations by way of motive and argument.

1. Conſider,

1. Conſider, *that time is precious, and the improvement of it is of great importance.* It is the ſeaſon and opportunity of ſerving and glorifying God, and ſecuring the eternal welfare and ſalvation of our ſouls.

Though there are ſpecial opportunities in the time of life, it may be all conſidered as an opportunity, which God has given us of preparing and qualifying ourſelves for another and better life. How careful ſhould we be to improve that time and ſeaſon, on which ſo much depends: no leſs than everlaſting glorie and happineſſe, or final ruin and miſerie.

2. Conſider, *that time is ſhort and uncertain.* There is no very long ſpace between the day of our birth, and the day of our death. How ſtrongly, by a variety of compariſons, does *Job* repreſent the ſhortneſſe of human life, and the ſwift and irrevocable progreſſe of time! *Now my days are ſwifter than a poſte: They flee away. They are paſſed away as the ſwift ſhips: as the eagle that haſteth to the prey.* And in another place, *My days are ſwifter than a weaver's ſhuttle.* Job ix. 25, 26. —vii. 6.

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3. *Proportionable to your care and diligence will be your progreſſe and improvement.* So it is often ſeen in the affairs and buſineſſe of this world. Among many, who have the ſame or like outward advantages, he uſually is the moſt ſucceſsful, who is the moſt diligent and punctual. In the purſuit of knowledge he likewiſe has, for the moſt part, the advantage, who beſt employs his time. It is the ſame in religion. The diligent, the watchful, the circumſpect Chriſtian, is the growing and improving Chriſtian.

Perhaps you know ſome, who ſet out with you in the Chriſtian courſe. You began together with equal ardour, and have enjoyed in a great meaſure the ſame external means and helps: but yet, their improvements, you think, are by far more conſiderable, than your's. Their knowledge of religious truths appears more diſtinct and clear. Their faith of inviſible things is lively and affecting. They are prepared both for life and for death. They have no tormenting fears of the one; nor ſolicitous deſire and concern for the other. Their moderation of affection toward the good and the evil things of this life, you evidently perceive,

ceive, is not inſenſibility and ſtupidity: but a wiſe and reaſonable, and determined preference of things heavenly and eternal, to things earthly and temporal.

They are ſeldom moved by anger: whereas you often fall into exceſſes of that paſſion. They can overlook and forget an injurie, when almoſt every little offence produces deep reſentment in your breaſt. They bear courageouſly very afflictive ſtrokes of providence. You ſhrink under the weight of ſmall burdens.

What is the reaſon of this? Is it not, that you have too much depended upon the fervour of your firſt reſolutions, and have much neglected the means of your progreſſe and improvement? Whereas they have been careful in redeeming their time by frequently impreſſing on their minds the obligations they are under, and reviving the ſenſe of the engagements they have entered into. They allot time for ſerious meditation and conſideration. When they pray, or hear, or engage in other religious ſervices; they are intent, and do it with

all their might, as in the preſence, and under the eye of God.

They not only read, but think. They not only hear, but recollect alſo and meditate afterwards. They have not only been intent and fully engaged in their private and public devotions: but they have alſo gladly embraced opportunities of edifying converſation and conference: and have carefully treaſured up many valuable obſervations, which they have made themſelves, or received from others. By theſe, and other means, they are continually on the improving hand, and grow daily ſtronger and ſtronger in the Lord.

4. For better exciting to the right improvement or redeeming of time, you may do well to *obſerve ſome great examples of diligence and zeal.* Such an one was the Apoſtle *Paul*, who was in labours more abundant, and carried the knowledge of true religion to a vaſt extent in the compaſſe of his indefatigable life. And ſuch was *Jeſus Chriſt*, our Lord and Sa-
Acts x. 38. viour, who, as St. *Peter* juſtly ſays, *went about doing good.* And himſelf once ſaid: *I muſt work the works of him that ſent me, whilſt it is day.*

day. The night cometh, wherein no man can work. And how well every portion of the ſhort time of his miniſtrie was employed, we evidently perceive from the hiſtorie of it in the goſpels: which hiſtorie, though very brief and compendious, ſets before us the moſt eminent example of zeal for the glorie of God, and the welfare of men, and of diligence in purſuing thoſe great ends, that ever the world ſaw. John ix. 4.

5. Laſtly, conſider, that *time well improved will afford comfort and peace in a day of affliction, and in the hour of death:* eſpecially, if you begin early to mind the true buſineſſe of life, and procede with ſteadineſſe in the way of religion and virtue. You will not have reaſon for boaſting: nor will you be diſpoſed to it. You will never be proud of your good works, but will humbly own your defects, and chearfully aſcribe the glorie of what has been well done to God, the fountain of all perfection, who has upheld, guided, taught and ſtrengthened you. But ſtill it will be very pleaſing and delightful to be conſcious of thoſe virtuous diſpoſitions and ſervices, which God himſelf approves and will reward. And you may be able in the end, to ſay with the Apoſtle, and

with a like joy and triumph: *I have fought a good fight, I have finiſhed my courſe. I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteouſneſſe, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them alſo that love his appearing.*

2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.

SERMON

SERMON II.

Jesus made a Curse for us.

GAL. iii. 13.

Gal. iii. 13. *Christ has redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a Tree:*

—14. *That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentils through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through Faith.*

EVERY one knows, that the main design of the Apostle in this epistle, is to disuade the *Galatians* from coming under the yoke of the law of *Moses*, as necessarie to acceptance with God, and eternal salvation.

As

SERM. II.

As theſe Chriſtians were his own converts, and they had paid too great regard to ſome artful men, ſince come in among them; he reproves them with ſharpneſſe, and ſets arguments before them with warmth and earneſtneſſe. *O fooliſh Galatians*, ſays he, in this third chapter, *who has bewitched you, that ye ſhould not obey the truth? before whoſe eyes Jeſus Chriſt has been evidently ſet forth crucified among you? He therefore that miniſtereth the ſpirit to you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Even as Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteouſneſſe. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, the ſame are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture foreſeeing, that God would juſtify the Heathen through faith, preached before the Goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying: In thee ſhall all nations be bleſſed. So then they which be of faith, are bleſſed with faithful Abraham. For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curſe. For it is written: Curſed is every one that continueth not in all things, which are written in the book of the law to do them. But that no man is juſtified by the law in the ſight of God, is evident. For the juſt ſhall live by faith. And the law is not of faith: but the man that doth them,*

ſhall live in them. Chriſt has redeemed us from the curſe of the law, being made a curſe for us. For it is written: Curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree: that the bleſſing of Abraham might come upon the Gentils through Jeſus Chriſt. SERM. II.

I ſhall firſt endeavour to ſhew, what is meant by *Chriſt*'s being made *a curſe for us*. After which we will obſerve the end and deſign of it.

1. The meaning of the expreſſion is, that our Lord had ſuffered the death of the croſs. *Chriſt*, ſays he, *has redeemed us from the curſe of the law being made a curſe for us*. The word, indeed, is harſh. But I ſay it truly. And I may juſtly ſo expreſs myſelf. *For it is written* in the law: *Curſed is every one that hangeth on a tree*. The text, here referred to, is in *Deuteronomy*. *And if a man have committed a ſin worthie of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body ſhall not remain all night upon the tree: but thou ſhalt in any wiſe bury him that day. For he that is hanged is accurſed of God: that the land be not defiled, which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.* —xxi. 22, 23.

The

SERM. II. The uſual puniſhments among the Jews were ſtrangling and ſtoning. And it is generally ſuppoſed, that by the *hanging* in *Deuteronomie* is intended the doing ſo after death. This appears from the preceeding words, which ſpeak of the man's being put to death, before his ſuſpenſion. Which ſhews, that this puniſhment was not exactly the ſame as the Roman crucifiction. For they crucified men alive, whereby they expired, before they were taken down. But this was only hanging up their bodies after they were dead, expoſing them to open ſhame for a time.

So ſay very judicious expoſitors. And if this be right, then, by our Lord's being on a croſſe ſo as to die there, he was made a curſe in a very emphatical ſenſe.

This *hanging on a tree*, according to the law of *Moſes*, was a ſuſpenſion of men, after they had been put to death for idolatrie, or blaſphemie, or ſome other great offence. But *Jeſus* ſuffered the pain of crucifixion, and died upon a croſſe.

The

The words of the law, before cited, are: *If thou hang him on a tree, his body ſhall not remain all night upon the tree: but thou ſhalt in any wiſe bury him that day. For he that is hanged is accurſed of God: that thy land be not defiled.* SERM. II.

That is, he is an object of execration, which ought to be taken out of the way; or he that is hanged on a tree, is an abomination: that is, the dead body of a man, hung up, and expoſed above ground, is a thing, extremely impure, and offenſive, and diſagreeable, and therefore it muſt be ſoon taken down, and removed out of ſight.

Our Lord therefore was treated, as if he had been accurſed, and abominable in the ſight of God and men.

The hiſtorie of our Lord's death in the Goſpels is a comment upon this text, and is well known to all. He was apprehended, tried, condemned, and crucified as a criminal. And he ſuffered death at the common place of execution without the gates of *Jeruſalem*.

Every

SERM. II. Every one did not conſider him as an offender, or guilty of any thing worthy of death. But the voice of the people, concurring with the opinion of their great council, prevailed. And the ſentence was executed without abatement.

Nor ſhould we omit to obſerve the word *made: being made a curſe for us.* He was innocent, but was treated as an offender: and that, according to the permiſſion, will, and appointment of God the Father, in which our Lord acquieſced. *Therefore does my Father love me*, ſays he, *becauſe I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me; but I lay it down of myſelf. I have power to lay it down and, I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.*

John x. 17, 18.

For this great trial he prepared himſelf by prayer and meditation. When it drew near, he earneſtly requeſted, *that the cup might paſs from him:* but added: *not my will, but thine be done.* Prayer being ended, he roſe up, and went chearfully through the ſcene of ſufferings that was alloted to him. So *Chriſt* was made

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a curse for us. Or, as it is expressed in another text: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousnesse of God in him.* SERM. II. 2 Cor. v. 21.

2. In the next place therefore we are to consider the ends and effects of this appointment, which are here expressed in a two fold phrase: *redeeming us from the curse of the law,* and obtaining *the blessing of Abraham.*

These words may be easily understood by observing the context, which was read at the beginning of this discourse. *For as many as are of the works of the law,* that is, who aim to be justified by the works of the law, *are under the curse. For it is written: Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* Which is next to impossible. And therefore every one, who adheres to the law, comes under a sentence of condemnation. *But Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law:* having set us free from an obligation to it, and taught us, how we may be justified by faith, or according to the rule of his Gospel. —ver. 10.

Which

SERM. II. Which is the ſame as the other privilege here mentioned: *that the bleſſing of Abraham might come upon the Gentils through Jeſus Chriſt*: that is, that the Gentils might be juſtified in the ſame way that he was, by faith, without the works of the Moſaic law, which were not then introduced, or inſtituted. —ver. 6, 7. *Even as Abraham believed, and it was accounted to him for righteouſneſſe. Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, that is,* who believe, as *Abraham* did, *the ſame are the children of Abraham,* and are accepted of God, as his people. —ver. 8. *And the Scripture foreſeeing, that God would juſtify the Heathen through faith*: that is, that the time would come, when all men ſhould be aſſured of juſtification and acceptance with God in the ſame way, *preached before the Goſpel unto Abraham, ſaying: In thee ſhall all nations be bleſſed.* —ver. 9. *So then they which be of faith,* who believe, and look for juſtification by faith, according to the Goſpel, the law and rule of real, ſincere holineſſe and virtue, *are bleſſed with faithful Abraham.*

This, I think, is the deſign and meaning of the Apoſtle in this place. And it is what he often teaches: that by the death and cru-

cifixion of *Chriſt* the law has been abrogated, SERM. II.
or rendered uſeleſs.

It is, I ſay, a thing, which he often ſpeaks of, as the deſign of *Chriſt*'s death, to deliver us from an obligation to the law of *Moſes*, and from the penalties and inconveniences hanging over them that diſobeyed the ritual ordinances of it. *Even ſo we, when we were children,* infants, under age, *were in bondage under the elements of the world: But when the fullneſs of the time was come, God ſent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,—that we might receive the adoption of ſons:* that we might be henceforth delivered from the numerous, and burdenſome rites of the law of *Moſes*, which had in them no real excellence, and that we might be treated as ſons, or children arrived to maturity: and might be accepted, and have acceſs to God in the ſincere performance of a truly holy and ſpiritual worſhip and ſervice, which is reaſonable in itſelf, perfective of our nature, and obligatorie at all times. Gal. iv. 3, 4, 5.

And at the beginning of the third chapter of this ſame epiſtle: *O fooliſh Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you ſhould not obey the truth:*

SERM. II. that ye ſhould not continue ſteady to the truth of the Goſpel, in its genuine plainneſs and ſimplicity, without Jewiſh rites and ceremonies? *before whom Jeſus Chriſt has been evidently ſet forth, crucified among you:* to whom *Chriſt's* death, and the ends and deſigns of it, were once ſo clearly repreſented.

—ii. 14, 15, 16. And in the Epiſtle to the Epheſians: *For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having aboliſhed in his fleſh the enmity, even the law of commandments, contained in ordinances, to make in himſelf of twain, one new man, ſo making peace. And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the croſſe; having ſlain the enmity thereby.*

—ii. 13—15. To the like purpoſe alſo in the Epiſtle to the Coloſians: *And you being dead in your ſins, and the uncircumciſion of your fleſh, he hath quickened together with him, having forgiven you all treſpaſſes: blotting out the hand-writing of ordinances, that was againſt us, which was contrarie to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his croſſe. Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in reſpect of an holy day,*

or

or of the new moon, or of the ſabbath-days: which SERM. II.
are a ſhadow of things to come; but the body is of Chriſt.

In theſe places the Apoſtle ſeems plainly to repreſent the aboliſhing of the ritual ordinances of the law, as an effect, or at leaſt a conſequence of *Chriſt*'s death. But it may be aſked: What influence had the death of *Chriſt* to this purpoſe? How did *Chriſt* redeem us from the curſe of the law by ſuffering himſelf an accurſed death? How did he, by his death on the croſſe, aboliſh the obligation of thoſe ordinances, which are not of a moral nature?

This queſtion has in it ſome difficulty. Nor did all at the time of the firſt preaching the Goſpel after our Lord's aſcenſion diſcern the law to be abrogated.

Let us therefore obſerve a few particulars for the ſolution of this difficulty.

1. When St. *Paul* ſpeaks of this, as having been effected by the croſſe of *Chriſt*, *he may thereby intend the whole of his doctrine:* as it is common, in many caſes, to expreſs the whole by a part.

SERM. II.

1 Cor. i. 18. —ver. 23, 24. *For the preaching of the croſſe is to them that periſh fooliſhneſſe:—But we preach Chriſt crucified, unto the Jews a ſtumbling block, and unto the Greeks fooliſhneſſe; but unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Chriſt the power of God and the wiſdom of God.* —chap. ii. 2. For *I determined not to know any thing among you, ſave Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.* He does not mean *Chriſt*'s crucifixion only. For he had taught the *Corinthians Chriſt*'s reſurrection, and the whole doctrine of the Goſpel. His meaning is, that he reſolved not to preach among them any philoſophical ſpeculations, but the Chriſtian religion only, and particularly *Chriſt*'s death, with all the articles depending upon it. So likewiſe: Gal. vi. 14, 15. *God forbid that I ſhould glory, ſave in the croſſe of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Chriſt Jeſus*, that is in the diſpenſation by him, and according to his doctrine, *neither circumciſion availeth any thing, nor uncircumciſion: but a new creature.*

We may therefore underſtand by the croſſe of *Chriſt*, his whole doctrine, confirmed by his death; and eaſily perceive, how *Chriſt* may be ſaid thereby to have aboliſhed the law. For he taught

taught only the great principles of religion, and the moral precepts of real holineſſe, in the greateſt extent and perfection, as reaching the heart. And he aſſured men, that they who received that doctrine, and acted according to it, would build upon a good foundation, and might depend upon acceptance with God, and future happineſſe. SERM. II.

Yea, he did himſelf ſay ſuch things, as amounted to a declaration, that the peculiarities of the law were no longer obligatorie. For he taught, that no part of divine worſhip was any longer to be confined to the temple at *Jeruſalem*, or any other place: that God is a ſpirit, and they that worſhip him muſt worſhip him in ſpirit and truth: and that thoſe evil things only, which proceed from the heart of man, are defiling.

2. *The ceaſing of the obligation of the Moſaic inſtitution*, may be ſpoken of as an effect or conſequence of the death of *Chriſt*, inaſmuch as his death was the concluſion of his miniſtrie, and the accompliſhment of all things foretold concerning the *Meſſiah*.

SERM. II. As the law was deſigned to be a type and adumbration only of good things to come, the obligation of it ceaſed upon *Chriſt*'s being fully manifeſted: who was the end of the law, to whom it pointed, and directed men.

The Apoſtle ſpeaks to this purpoſe, particularly, in the argument before taken notice of in the Epiſtle to the *Coloſians*. *Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in reſpect of an holy day:—Which are a ſhadow of things to come: But the body*, the ſubſtance, *is of Chriſt.*

Chriſt may be ſaid, to have been fully come, and the things foretold concerning him, may be ſaid to have been accompliſhed at his death, and his reſurrection. As he ſaid to the Diſciples: *Theſe are the words, which I ſpake unto you, whilſt I was yet with you: that all things muſt be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moſes, and in the Prophets, and in the Pſalms concerning me.*

Luk. xxiv 44.

Chriſt then being come, and all things foretold of him having been fulfilled in his miniſtrie, and death, and ſubſequent reſurrection: the law, and its rituals, which had been brought

brought in, and appointed to be in force only till he came, they ceaſed to have longer any obligation. *Wherefore then ſerveth the law?—It was added, becauſe of tranſgreſſion, till the ſeed ſhould come, to whom the promiſe was made;—But before faith came, we were kept under the law, ſhut up unto the faith, which ſhould afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the law was our School-maſter,* or, child's guide, *to bring us unto Chriſt, that we might be juſtified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a School-maſter. For ye are all the children of God by faith in Chriſt Jeſus.* SERM. II. Gal. iii. 19. ver. 23—26.

3. Which brings me to one thing more, by way of ſolution of this difficulty. Upon the death of *Chriſt* the obligation of the law ceaſed, becauſe by his excellent doctrine, and miraculous works, his ſelf-denying miniſtrie and death, *he has rendered all theſe ordinances of the law uſeleſs and unneceſſarie.*

They had been of uſe formerly. By their number and variety, their ſhow and ſplendor, they were ſerviceable to engage and employ the Jewiſh people, and thoſe who joined themſelves to them, and to hinder them from re-

SERM. II. volting to idolatrie, and taking up the cuſtoms of the people around them. But they are now no longer neceſſarie. For by the perfect doctrine, the holy and examplarie life, and the painfull and ignominious death of the Lord *Jeſus*, ſuch an argument has been exhibited for true holineſſe, heavenly-mindedneſs, the ſincere and conſtant worſhip and ſervice of God, that theſe ritual ordinances are no longer requiſite or uſeful. There needs not now any great number of external, diſcriminating rites and ordinances, to keep the people of God diſtinct, and ſeparate from the reſt of the world. For in the death, and reſurrection of *Chriſt*, are afforded ſuch powerful inducements to virtue, as may effectually preſerve men from idolatorie, and apoſtacie from God, without the guards and fences of ritual ordinances.

This then was one end of *Chriſt*'s ſubmitting to the fatigues and inconveniences of his laborious miniſtrie, and to the pain and ignominie of the death of the croſſe: that he might deliver his people, and all who believe in him, from the numerous and burdenſome appointments of the law of *Moſes*.

He

He was *made a curſe for us*, he was expoſed to the opprobrious death of the croſſe, and all the grievous circumſtances of it, that we might be *redeemed from the curſe of the law*, and no longer fear any penalties for neglecting any of its unneceſſarie inſtitutions: and that we might enjoy *the bleſſing of Abraham*, that privilege which was promiſed to be conveyed to the world through him, and which himſelf once enjoyed in his own perſon, free from the appointments of the law, afterwards enjoyned, with aſſurance of the divine favour and acceptance, ſolely upon the ground of a reaſonable and truly holy ſervice and obedience. SERM. II.

III. Nothing now remains, but that I add a few remarks.

1. We may now diſtinctly perceive, *for whom Chriſt was made a curſe.*

Chriſt, ſays the text, has redeemed us from *the curſe of the law.* Thereby ſome would underſtand particularly the Jews, who, they ſay, alone were under the law. But I think it evident, that the Apoſtle means Gentils, as well as Jews. For he here ſays, that *Chriſt has redeemed,*

SERM. III. *deemed*, or delivered, *us from the curſe of the law, that the bleſſing of Abraham might come upon the Gentils.* And our Lord himſelf, in the time of his own miniſtrie, when the call of the Gentils was not fully opened, expreſsly ſays, he died for all, and not for thoſe of the Jewiſh nation only. *And I lay down my life for the ſheep. And other ſheep I have, which are not of this fold: Them alſo I muſt bring in.*

John x. 15, 16.

Indeed all were in ſome meaſure *under the law*, till *Chriſt* came: obedience to it being the only way of obtaining a ſhare among the profeſſed people of God, or his viſible church.

The Chriſtians in *Galatia* were not Jews, but were converted from Gentiliſm. Yet the Apoſtle writes to them in this manner: *But now, after that ye have known God,—how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye again deſire to be in bondage?* They never had been Jews, nor proſelites to Judaiſm. The ſenſe of the Apoſtle's words therefore is this: How can ye deſpiſe the freedom of the Goſpel, and approve of, and chooſe that ſtate of things, which prevailed before? When all were required to receive the law of *Moſes*, as the external

—chap. iv. 9.

ternal badge of relation to God, and his family. SERM. II.

And afterwards he ſays, *Stand faſt therefore in the liberty wherewith Chriſt has made us free, and be not intangled again with that yoke of bondage.* Which expreſſions ſhew, that the Apoſtle ſuppoſed Gentils, as well as Jews, to have been by *Chriſt* ſet at liberty, from the law of *Moſes:* or, as in the text, that he had *delivered us from the curſe of the law.* —chap v. 1.

For before that, according to the conſtitution of things introduced by the law of *Moſes*, ſince the Abrahamic covenant, all were to be proſelyted to the Jewiſh religion. There was no other way of admiſſion to religious communion, or civil converſation with the people of God.

The character of *Cornelius* in the *Acts*, is, that *he was a devout* or good *man, who feared God with all his houſe.* Nevertheleſs *Peter*, till farther enlightened, and better inſtructed, in the Chriſtian ſcheme, and particularly directed, ſcrupled to go to him. And when he came to his houſe, he ſaid: *Ye know,* —x. 2. —ver. 28.

SERM. II. *how that it is an unlawful thing for a man that is a Jew, to keep company, or come to one of another nation. But God,* through Chriſt, *has ſhewed me, that I ſhould not call any man common or unclean.*

2. We here ſee reaſon to admire the love of God, and of the Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*; and what a tribute of gratitude, reſpect and obedience is due to him, who was *made a curſe for us:* who, according to the will of the Father, reſigned himſelf to a moſt painful, and above all a moſt ignominious death: who ſuffered as a malefactor, with men of the worſt characters. How reproachful this in the eye of the world! How grievous an affliction muſt this have been to the Lord *Jeſus*, after all the honors of his miraculous miniſtrie! Here is every thing grievous and reproachful, that can touch an innocent and generous mind!

Yet our Lord went through it patiently, and meekly, with a view to the great and deſirable ends, propoſed by it. And therefore his death is indeed moſt glorious. And it has been greatly rewarded. But it was a mixture of very bitter ingredients, which he taſted of.

And it was for our ſake: and, in particular, that we might be delivered from the burden of the law, and from all the penalties annexed to neglect and diſobedience to it. And it is through him, that we, who once were afar off, have been brought nigh unto God: that we, who before were aliens, are made heirs, and fellow-citizens, and of the houſhold of God, without any of the burdenſome inſtitutions of the law of *Moſes*; which muſt ſtill have been in force, and we muſt have ſubmitted to them, in order to our being of the people of God, and members of his church, if *Chriſt* had not by his death given ſuch atteſtations as he has done to the truth of that doctrine of pure religion, which he had taught. And if he had not alſo thereby inſpired his immediate Diſciples and followers with an invincible love and zeal for truth and virtue, enabling them to withſtand and ſurmount the greateſt allurements and the moſt frightful diſcouragements of the preſent life. SERM. II.

3. A ſerious attention to this text, and argument, may aſſiſt us to underſtand ſome other texts, where *Chriſt* is ſaid to have died for us, *for our ſins*.

It

SERM. II.

It ſeems, that the death of *Chriſt* was not, properly ſpeaking, ſo neceſſarie on God's part, as on ours. God never valued, nor delighted in the external ordinances of the law of *Moſes*. What he looked for, and required, chiefly, was *truth in the inner parts. He deſired mercie rather than ſacrifice, and the knowledge of God the Lord more than burnt-offerings, &c.*

He was not at all unwilling, that men ſhould be releaſed from the obligation of numerous ritual inſtitutions. Find but out a way to bring men to good underſtanding in things of religion, and a love of real holineſſe: ſo that they ſhall no longer be in danger of caſting off the divine fear, and going after idols that are not able either to hear or ſave thoſe who ſerve them: and he would be willing that ordinances of poſitive appointment ſhall be laid aſide.

This way he has himſelf graciouſly diſcovered, and approved of: ſending his Son, the *Meſſiah*, and appointing the humiliation, as well as other circumſtances of his life and death, in which he acquieſced. Whereupon the many peculiarities of the law of *Moſes* were aboliſhed

abolished and laid aſide with the conſent and approbation of him, who had appointed them. SERM. II.

In like manner God was not unwilling to pardon ſinners, if they could but be brought to repentance. For this purpoſe the life and death of *Chriſt* are admirably ſuited, by affording more forcible conſiderations to awaken and reclaim ſinners, and confirm the virtue of good men, than all the diſcoveries of reaſon, aided by former revelations. God needed not to be *appeaſed*. But ſinners needed to be *amended*. When they are ſo, he readily accepts them. God is in himſelf gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and abundant in goodneſſe and truth. He deſires not the death of ſinners, but their life, and ſalvation. If ſinful men will but be perſuaded to forſake their evil ways, which are diſpleaſing to a pure and holy God, the controverſie between Him and them will be made up. This is the doctrine of the Old and New Teſtament. Says God by the Prophet *Iſaiah*. —chap. lv. 7. *Let the wicked forſake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*

It

SERM. II. It is the ſame under the diſpenſation of the Goſpel. There alſo forgiveneſſe is annexed to repentance. This is the important doctrine preached by *Chriſt* himſelf, and his fore-runner *John* the Baptiſt, and his Apoſtles after him.

—chap. iii. 3. Of *John* the Baptiſt, St. *Luke* ſays: *And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptiſm of repentance for the remiſſion of ſins.* The ſame is the character of our Lord's miniſtrie, in all the Evangeliſts. *From that time Jeſus began to preach, and to ſay, Repent, for* —iv. 17. *the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* So in *Mat-* —i. 14, 15 *thew.* To the like purpoſe in *Mark.* And our Lord, when riſen from the dead, tells his Luk. xxiv. 47. Diſciples, that now *repentance and remiſſion of ſins ſhould be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jeruſalem.* And after our Lord's aſcenſion, when the Jews at *Jeruſalem* were much moved by the diſcourſe *Peter* had Acts ii. 37, 38. made, and *ſaid to him, and the reſt of the Apoſtles, Men and brethren, what ſhall we do? Then Peter ſaid unto them: Repent, and be baptiſed every one of you in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins; and ye ſhall receive the gift of the Holy Ghoſt.* And afterwards, *Peter*, in

the preſence of the Jewiſh council, ſays: *Him hath God exalted—to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins.* SERM. II. Acts v. 31.

St. *Paul* reminding the elders at *Miletus* of his paſt conduct among them, obſerves, *how he had kept back nothing that was profitable to them, but had ſhewed them, and taught them publickly, and from houſe to houſe: teſtifying both to the Jews, and alſo to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* And giving an account of his conduct, and the doctrine taught by him, ſince his converſion to the faith of *Jeſus Chriſt*, he declares to king *Agrippa*, and the great companie with him, how he had *ſhewed firſt unto them of Damaſcus, and at Jeruſalem, and throughout all the coaſts of Judea, and then to the Gentils, that they ſhould repent, and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance.* Acts xx. 20, 21. —chap. xxvi. 20.

Sincere repentance therefore is the condition, upon which ſinful men may obtain the forgiveneſſe of their paſt ſins. Yea our Lord aſſures us, *there is joy in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth.* He alſo ſays, that *there is joy*

SERM. II. *in heaven over one ſinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine juſt perſons, which need no repentance.*

Luke xv. 7—10.

It is certain therefore, that God in his great goodneſſe, will pardon and accept of penitent ſinners. But the great difficulty is to bring men to forſake their ſins, and return to the practice of virtue. This, and our great want of conſideration, our affection for earthly and ſenſible things, the little regard which men have for the things of religion, have rendered the moſt awakening arguments neceſſarie. Theſe are ſet before us in *Chriſt Jeſus*. And *Chriſt* has died, in order to bring us to God, and to induce us to continue in the ways of righteouſneſſe. *Who his own-ſelf bare our ſins in his own body on the tree, that we being dead to ſin, ſhould live unto righteouſneſs: By whoſe ſtripes ye were healed. For ye were as ſheep going aſtray: but are now returned unto the ſhepherd and biſhop of your ſouls.*

1 Peter ii. 24, 25.

4. And laſtly. Our meditations on this text may aſſiſt us in diſcerning the divine wiſdom in the time of the Chriſtian revelation.

The Apoſtle ſays, *When the fulneſs of the time was come, God ſent forth his Son,—made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of ſons.* The purpoſe was formed very early. And *Chriſt* is ſpoken of as *the lamb ſlain from the foundation of the world.* But the full manifeſtation of this deſign was deferred. The world was not ſooner fit for the mild and gracious diſpenſation of the Goſpel. It is true, that *Abraham*, and the Patriarchs, were free from many incumbrances afterwards introduced. And for a while true religion, the worſhip of God, was upheld by the piety of the heads of that familie. But when that familie became a nation, it evidently appeared, that a number of diſcriminating rites was needfull to keep them ſeparate from their idolatrous neighbours, and to maintain true religion in that which was the only nation and people, that worſhipped the only true God,

SERM. II. Gal. iv. 4, 5. Rev. xiii. 8.

We ought not therefore to ſurmiſe, that the coming of the *Meſſiah* was too long deferred. If the expectations of men had not been raiſed before-hand, if there had not been great preparations made for his reception: the Chriſtian

SERM. II. revelation, and the death of *Christ* itself, might have been either in vain, or however, not to so good purpose, as it was.

Let us then acknowledge, and celebrate the wisdom of the divine Being in affording the world the advantage of so reasonable, so spiritual, and so gracious an institution. Let us be thankful, that the knowledge of it has been brought to us, and that the evidences of the divine original of this religion are still so clear and satisfactorie.

And as we in these late ages of the world have *the blessing of Abraham*, which was so early designed, free from the incumbrances afterwards introduced, and imposed even upon his own posterity by nature; let us prize it, and steadily adhere to the essential articles, and indispensable laws of it, chearfully *serving God in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our life.*

Luke i. 74, 75.

SERMON

SERMON III.

The Promiſe annexed to Godlineſſe.

1 TIM. iv. 8.

For bodily Exerciſe profiteth little: but Godlineſſe is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.

SERM. III.

THESE words compriſe in them three propoſitions.

I. Bodily exerciſe profiteth little.

II. Godlineſſe is profitable unto all things, having, particularly, promiſe of the life that is to come.

III. Godlineſſe has alſo promiſe of the life that now is.

SERM. III. I intend to conſider each propoſition, in the order juſt mentioned.

I. *Bodily exerciſe profiteth little.* Which words are differently explained by expoſitors.

1. Some interpret theſe words in this manner: *All that men do outwardly in religion, though commanded by God, if it be ſeparated from the devotion of the heart, profiteth little.* This cannot procure acceptance with God, nor make amends for defects and miſcarriages, in point of true holineſſe.

But there ſeems to be little ground for this interpretation. It is not favoured by any part of the connexion, except that *Godlineſſe*, which is oppoſed to *bodily exerciſe*, does indeed undoubtedly include in it *the devotion of the heart*, as well as outward acts and performances of religion.

2. Some ſuppoſe the Apoſtle herein to refer *to the exerciſes of the Greeks, in their olympic and other games, and any exerciſes of the body preparatorie to thoſe public contentions.*

This

This interpretation has an appearance of pro- SERM. III.
bability. St. *Paul* had juſt before exhorted *Timothie* to *exerciſe himſelf unto Godlineſſe*. And the original word for *exerciſe* is a technical word, often uſed concerning the preparatorie exerciſes of the Grecian racers and combatants, and the vigour and activity which they exerted in the public contention.

The Apoſtle then adds: For bodily exerciſe, ſuch as that of thoſe who contend, for victorie in the celebrated games of *Greece*, or polite parts of the world, as they are eſteemed, though it be very difficult, painful and laborious, *profiteth little*. It may conduce to the encreaſe of bodily ſtrength and vigour, and ſecure the victorie in thoſe combats, and the crown, and other honours, and temporal advantages, annexed to it in this world. But all this is a trifling matter, in compariſon of the advantages of Godlineſſe. And after this manner St. *Paul* writes to the Corinthians.

3. Hereby ſome underſtand *a ſevere and exceſſive diſcipline, practiſed by ſome perſons, which is mere will-worſhip, conſiſting of long and pain-*

SERM. III. *ful faſtings, and abſtinence from things in themſelves lawful and innocent.*

Bodily exerciſe, ſays a learned expoſitor, is here bodily diſcipline, lying in abſtaining from certain meats, keeping ſet faſts, watchings, lying upon the ground, going bare-foot, wearing ſack-cloth, or hair-cloth, abſtaining from wine, or marriage: all this is of little advantage: the mind of man is not bettered hereby.

This interpretation ſeems to be not a little favoured and ſupported by the coherence. Now the ſpirit ſpeaketh expreſsly, ſays the Apoſtle at the beginning of the chapter, *that in the later times ſome ſhall depart from the faith, —ſpeaking lies in hypocriſie,—forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats, which God has created to be received with thankſgiving of them which believe and know the truth. —If thou put the brethren in mind of theſe things, thou ſhalt be a good miniſter of Jeſus Chriſt.—But refuſe prophane and idle fables: and exerciſe thyſelf rather unto Godlineſſe. For bodily exerciſe profiteth little: whereas Godlineſſe is profitable unto all things.*

This

This ſenſe is received by many expoſitors of good note: Bodily exerciſe, ſays one, intends uſeleſs mortifications and macerations of the body, and other ſuperſtitious practices then in uſe among the Jews and ſome other people. And, ſays another: By bodily exerciſe St. *Paul* means abſtinences and auſterities, which ſimple, or hypocritical men had introduced. And he makes uſe of an expreſſion, which properly ſignifies the combats or exerciſes of thoſe who contended in the Grecian games: becauſe thoſe perſons obſerved a certain diet, or regimen, to render themſelves more fit for the combats. The Apoſtle's obſervation in this place may be illuſtrated by what he ſays to the *Coloſſians*: *Wherefore, if ye be dead with Chriſt from the rudiments of the world: Why, as though living in the world, are ye ſubject to ordinances? (touch not; taſte not; handle not: which all are to periſh with the uſing) after the commandments and doctrines of men:— Which things have indeed a ſhow of will-worſhip and humility, and neglecting of the bodie, not in any honour to the ſatisfying of the fleſh.* A paſſage likewiſe of a polite Jewiſh writer, contemperarie with our Saviour and his Apoſtles, though no Chriſtian, may caſt ſome light upon this interpretation. If, ſays he, you ſee a man

SERM. III.

Col. ii. 20—23.

deſignedly

SERM. III. deſignedly mortifying himſelf with hunger and thirſt when the circumſtances of things lay him not under any ſuch neceſſity, omitting the uſual refreſhments of bathing and anointing, greatly negligent, or even ſordid in his dreſſe, often lying upon the bare ground inſtead of a bed, and pleaſing himſelf with ſuch ſort of temperance; have pity upon him, and ſhew him wherein that virtue (of temperance) conſiſts: for all thoſe exerciſes are uſeleſs torments of body and mind.

The Apoſtle's deſign then is this: Bodily exerciſe, ſuch as is practiſed in the public games of *Greece*, or in the preparatorie exerciſes: and, that which ſome others obſerve according to rules and inſtitutions of human invention, is of little advantage.

That is the firſt propoſition.

II. The ſecond propoſition contained in the text is, that *Godlineſſe is profitable for all things; having, in particular, promiſe of the life that is to come.*

This indeed ſtands laſt. But I have choſen SERM. III.
to invert the order, and ſpeak of this firſt; becauſe the promiſe, or happineſſe of the life that now is; as to Godlineſſe, or Godly perſons; very much depends upon the promiſe of the life that is to come. For which reaſon I hope this method will not be diſapproved.

By Godlineſſe I think we are here to underſtand every branch of religion and virtue, which is reaſonable in itſelf, or expreſsly required and commanded of God. Indeed the word is ſometimes uſed in a more reſtrained ſenſe, for that part of our duty, which more immediately reſpects God: as when it is ſaid, that we are taught by the Goſpel to live *ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* But at other times the word has a more comprehenſive meaning. So at the end of the preceeding chapter of this epiſtle to *Timothie*: *And without controverſie, great is the myſterie of Godlineſſe.* Again, in another chapter: *If any man teach otherwiſe, and conſent not to wholeſome words, even the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and the doctrine which is according to Godlineſſe; he is proud, knowing nothing.*

Tit. ii. 12.

—iii. 16.

1 Tim. vi. 3, 4.

What

SERM. III. What the Apoſtle intends by Godlineſſe here we may learn from a parellel exhortation in the ſecond epiſtle to this ſame Evangeliſt: 2 Tim. ii. 22, 23. *Flee alſo youthful luſts: but follow righteouſneſſe, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart. But fooliſh and unlearned queſtions avoid.* There he directs *Timothie* to *follow* the ſeveral branches of that Godlineſſe, to which here in the text he only in general exhorts him to exerciſe himſelf.

Undoubtedly Godlineſſe in the comprehenſive, which is a juſt ſenſe of the word, includes every thing holy and virtuous, the love of God and our neighbour, and all the duties included in theſe general precepts and principles of religion.

It includes the fear or reverence of God, truſt in his care and providence, faith in his promiſes, and a readineſſe to bear and endure whatever he lays upon us.

It includes likewiſe the practice of truth, righteouſneſſe and goodneſſe toward men. We ſhould alſo be meek, patient and long ſuffering. And we are to govern and regulate

our

our affections, ſenſes and appetites, according to the rules of reaſon, uſing all the comforts and innocent enjoyments of this life with ſobriety and moderation. SERM. III.

If we will compleat the character of Godlineſſe, we ſhould walk in all the ordinances and commandments of the Lord blameleſs, without any wilful, deſigned, or allowed exceptions and omiſſions, or preſumptuous tranſgreſſions whatever.

And we ſhould maintain and profeſs the truths, which God has made known to us, whether by reaſon or by revelation, whoever denies, or oppoſes them.

This is Godlineſſe, which, as the Apoſtle here ſays, *is profitable for all things*, and in particular *has a promiſe of the life which is to come.*

They who live godly, who adhere to and obſerve the doctrine which is according to Godlineſſe, and practice the ſeveral parts of piety, juſt deſcribed, ſhall obtain everlaſting life:

SERM. III. life; happineſſe and glorie in a future ſtate, when the life that now is has a period.

This is ſo certain and ſo manifeſt a truth, that to you it needs no proof or demonſtration. *Jeſus* himſelf aſſures us, he came, that his people *might have life; and that they might have it more abundantly.* He has declared, that when he ſhall come again to judge the world, and ſhall finally ſeparate men according to their different characters, *the righteous ſhall go away into life eternal.* He ſaid to his diſciples: *If I live, ye ſhall live alſo:* and bid them *not to fear,* though a little *flock,* ſince it *was their Father's good pleaſure to give them a kingdom.* This is, as it were, his laſt will and teſtament: *Father, I will that they whom thou haſt given me be with me, where I am, that they may behold my glorie, which thou haſt given me.* It would be tedious, to recite only a ſmall part of the paſſages of the Goſpels and Epiſtles of the New Teſtament, where this is clearly taught. I ſhall only remind you of the beginning of the Second Epiſtle to *Timothie,* and of the Epiſtle to *Titus.* The former is: *Paul an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, by the will of God, according to the promiſe of life, which is in Chriſt Jeſus.* The

John x. 10. Mat. xxv. 48. John xiv. 19. Luke xii. 32. John xvii. 24.

latter;

latter: *Paul, a ſervant of God, and an Apoſtle of Jeſus Chriſt, according to the faith of God's elect, and the acknowledging of the truth which is after Godlineſſe: in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lye, promiſed before the world began.* SERM. III.

Upon the foundation of this well-grounded hope, the Apoſtles recommend it to men, to forſake all ſin, and practice all virtue. For, ſays St. Paul, *if ye live after the fleſh, ye ſhall die: but if ye through the ſpirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye ſhall live.* And in the laſt chapter of this epiſtle to *Timothie: Charge them that are rich in this world,—that they do good, that they be rich in good works,—laying up in ſtore—a good foundation againſt the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.* Rom. viii. 13. 1 Tim. vi. 17, 18, 19.

This then is a faithful ſaying, and worthie of all acceptation.

III. The third propoſition in the text is, that *Godlineſſe has alſo the promiſe of the preſent life, or the life that now is.*

This, poſſibly, may require ſome proof and evidence. The former propoſition, ſome may be

SERM. III. be ready to ſay, is indeed unqueſtioned, and without controverſie true and certain. There
Heb. iv. 10 does *remain a reſt to the people of God.* When *Chriſt* ſhall come again to render to every one according to his work, there will be equal and exact retributions made to all. And the righteous ſhall receive a full recompence of all their ſervices, labours and ſufferings. But here it is not ſo. Here the religious and virtuous ſeem not to have any very deſirable portion allotted to them. They are often neglected and ſcorned: and even hated and oppreſſed. They are truly and properly ſtiled pilgrims and ſtrangers on this earth. And this world is to them a very vale of tears. Did not *Paul* and *Barnabas*, as they went on confirming the churches, which
Acts xiv. 22. they had planted, acknowledge, *that we muſt through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.* Does not St. *Paul* likewiſe ſay, that
2 Tim. iii. 12. *all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* And *Solomon* under the ancient Moſaic diſpenſation, when promiſes of temporal good things for the righteous, are thought to have been more expreſs, declares from his
Eccl. ix. 1, 2. obſervation of things: *that no man knows love or hatred by all that is before him:* and that *all things come alike to all.*

To which I would anſwer, that nevertheleſs it ought to be ſuppoſed, that there is a truth in the obſervation of the text, that *Godlineſſe is profitable for all things, and has promiſe of the life that now is.* We have no good reaſon to charge the Apoſtle with inconſiſtence. Nor has he forgot what he ſaid upon other occaſions, of the afflictions and perſecutions, endured by himſelf, or others, in the ſervice of truth. No, theſe things were ever preſent to his mind. And he immediately adds after the words we are conſidering; *This is a faithful ſaying, and worthie of all acceptation. For therefore we both labour and ſuffer reproach, becauſe we truſt in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of them that believe.* SERM. III.

Let me attempt an illuſtration of this point in the following obſervations.

1. It is certain, that God's providence is over all his works, and that he has an eſpecial, and more favourable regard to the righteous and ſincerely good men than to others: As *David* ſays: *The righteous Lord loveth righteouſneſſe, his countenance doth behold the upright:* which ought to be admitted as an undoubted Pſ. xi. 7.

SERM. III. maxim, never to be called in queſtion: and is equivalent to what St. *Paul* ſays in the words cited juſt now, *God is the Saviour of all men, eſpecially of them that believe.*

2. It ought to be owned, that the great promiſe of the Goſpel is eternal life, or happineſſe in a future ſtate, the life which is to come, as it is expreſſed in the text. *And this is the promiſe, that he has promiſed us, even eternal life.* Again, *And this is the record, that God has given us eternal life: and this life is in his Son.* And to the like purpoſe many other texts of the New Teſtament. See 2 *Tim.* i. 1. *Tit.* i. 1, 2, 3. *Heb.* viii. 6.

1 John ii. 25.

—v. 11.

3. Nevertheleſs there are under the Goſpel diſpenſation promiſes and aſſurances of comfort, peace and happineſſe to good men in the preſent world. Says our Lord, *Bleſſed are the meek: for they ſhall inherit the earth.* Arguing againſt ſolicitude for the things of this preſent life, he ſays: *Therefore take no thought*, that is, be not anxious, *ſaying, What ſhall we eat? or what ſhall we drink? or wherewithal ſhall we be cloathed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of theſe things. But ſeek ye*

Mat. v. 5.

Mat. vi. 31, 32.

firſt the kingdom of God, and his righteouſneſſe: SERM. III.
and all theſe things ſhall be added unto you. And, Mat. xix. 29.
Every one that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or ſiſters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's ſake, ſhall receive an hundred fold, and ſhall inherit everlaſting life. Or, as in another Goſpel, *ſhall receive an hundred fold, now in this preſent time, houſes, and brethren, and ſiſters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with perſecutions: and in the world to come, eternal life.* And when he forewarned the Diſciples, that *in the world they ſhould have tribulation*, he ſufficiently aſſures them, that through him, they would have peace and comfort. Mark x. 30. John xvi. 33.

4. But yet neither the Law nor the Goſpel makes promiſes and aſſurances of remarkable proſperity and greatneſſe to all good men in this world. Not much wealth, or great honour and reſpect from men: but rather only a competence of good things, favour and eſteem with good men, and thoſe among whom they live. This ſeems to be what our Lord means, when he ſays, all theſe things, food and raiment, before ſpoken of, ſhall be added unto you.

SERM. III.

Nor is it any thing more, that is promiſed in the Old Teſtament. So particularly in the thirty-ſeventh Pſalm a remarkable portion of ſcripture, with regard to this point. *Truſt in the Lord, and do good. So ſhall thou dwell in the land, and verily thou ſhalt be fed.—For the meek ſhall inherit the earth, and ſhall delight themſelves in the abundance of peace.—I have been young, and now am old: yet have I not ſeen the righteous forſaken, nor his ſeed begging bread.* And at the ſixteenth verſe of that pſalm: *A little that a righteous man has is better than the riches of many wicked.* Which is entirely conformable to what our Lord obſerves: *A man's life conſiſteth not in the abundance which he poſſeſſeth.* And conſidering the ſnares and temptations of this preſent world, ſome wiſe men have choſen a competence, as the moſt deſirable condition, preferable, as to want, ſo alſo to abundance. Says Agur: *Remove far from me vanity and lies; give me neither poverty, nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: leaſt I be full, and deny thee, and ſay, Who is the Lord? or leaſt I be poor, and ſteal, and take the name of my God in vain.*

Pſ. xxxvii. 3.
—ver. 11.
—ver. 25.
Luke xii. 15.
Prov. xxx. 8, 9.

5. Some

5. Some inequality and diverſity of circum- SERM. III.
ſtances, with a variety of afflictions, is not unſuitable to the preſent ſtate and condition. In this world the nature and conſtitution of all men is frail and mortal; it is a ſtate of trial, not of recompence. All therefore muſt unavoidably be liable to ſome, yea to many inconveniences, troubles, pains, ſorrows and diſappointments. And all without exception muſt in the end ſubmit to the ſtroke of death.

Good men, as well as others, may meet with trials and afflictions. It is the neceſſarie conſequence and reſult of the preſent frame of things. It cannot be otherwiſe, without a continued ſeries of miraculous interpoſitions, and overthrowing the preſent courſe of nature, and turning this world, which appears to be a ſtate of trial into a ſtate of remuneration and reward. Good men being mortal as well as others, they are liable to various bodily weakneſſes and indiſpoſitions, to pining and tedious ſickneſſes, and even to long-continued, exquiſite, and tormenting pains. And they may be tried and exerciſed with other diſaſters and

SERM. III. afflictions, the death of children or other relatives and friends; at other times, by the unkindneſſe, and ſad miſcarriages of thoſe whoſe ſpiritual and eternal intereſts are moſt precious and deſirable to them.

In ſuch a world as this, wherein all are frail and mortal, where there are different characters, wiſe and fooliſh, good and bad; where there are different tempers and diſpoſitions, where there is much peeviſhneſſe and perverſeneſſe, as well as mildneſſe and compliance; there will be a great deal of uneaſineſſe and unhapineſſe, and a very conſiderable diverſity of circumſtances. Some bad men may attain to abundance of outward grandeur and worldly proſperity: and ſome good men may be depreſſed, abuſed, and ill-treated. At the ſame time, conſidering, that neither the affliction of the one, nor the proſperity of the other can laſt always; and that neither condition is unmixed, and entirely throughout uniform and of a piece, the inequality is not vaſt. For in much outward proſperity, the moſt eſtabliſhed and ſecure, there will be cares and fears, and there may be ſtinging reflections. And in afflictive caſes there are uſually ſome

ſome intervals of eaſe, ſome alleviations and abatements of pain and grief, ſome refreſhing ſupports, cordials and conſolations. SERM. III.

Which leads us to obſerve farther:

6. Piety has many advantages relating to this preſent life, and good men have grounds of ſupport and comfort in every condition: whereby the *promiſe of the life that now is*, is fulfilled and made good to them.

But the farther conſideration of this point muſt be deferred to another ſeaſon.

SERMON IV.

The Promiſe annexed to Godlineſſe.

1 TIM. iv. 8.

For bodily Exerciſe profiteth little: but Godlineſſe is profitable unto all things, having promiſe of the Life that now is, and of that which is to come.

I have already ſhewn, what we are to underſtand by bodily exerciſe, and that Godlineſſe has promiſe of the life which is to come.

III. The third thing is, that *Godlineſſe has promiſe of the life that now is.* And for illuſtrating this point ſeveral obſervations have been mentioned.

1. It

SERM. IV.

1. It is certain, that the divine providence is over all his works, and that God has an eſpecial, and more favourable regard to righteous and truly good men than to others.

2. It ought to be owned, that the chief promiſe of the Goſpel is eternal life, or happineſſe in a future ſtate.

3. Nevertheleſs there are under the Goſpel-diſpenſation promiſes and aſſurances of comfort, peace and happineſſe to good men in this world.

4. But yet neither the law nor the Goſpel makes promiſes and aſſurances of remarkable worldly proſperity and greatneſſe to all good men in this world.

5. Some inequality and diverſity of circumſtances, with a variety of afflictions and troubles, is not unſuitable to the preſent ſtate and condition.

6. Piety has many advantages relating to this preſent life, and good men have grounds of

of ſupport and comfort in every condition: whereby the *promiſe of the life that now is*, is fulfilled and made good to them. SERM. IV.

This was juſt mentioned the laſt opportunity. And it is the main point, which is now to be made out by us.

And I preſume, that all may by this time be ſenſible of the reaſonableneſſe of the method, in which we have proceeded: firſt inſiſting upon the promiſe of the *life which is to come:* inaſmuch as that promiſe, and the hope of future eternal life, cannot but be an immediate ſource of comfort and joy. And without that promiſe and hope, the practice of virtue and the profeſſion of truth, if poſſible, would in ſome caſes be extremely difficult and uncomfortable. For what ſhould induce men to hazard all their preſent intereſts for the ſake of truth? With what ſatisfaction could an upright friend and patron of religion and virtue reſign this preſent life, and ſubmit to and undergo a painful death, for the ſake of truth, if there is no life to come, where ſome recompence may be received.

SERM. IV. In ſhewing, then, the advantages and comforts of piety here, and its promiſe of the life that now is, the promiſe of the life which is to come muſt be ſuppoſed, and taken for granted, or well proved: as indeed it is a certain truth, or faithful ſaying, and worthie of all acceptation.

In making out this point I intend to inſiſt on the ſeveral following particulars.

We will compare the condition of good and bad men in this world. In the next place we will obſerve ſome temporal advantages which piety will be attended with, and may be the means of. It alſo ſecures from ſome temporal evils and troubles. And finally it affords comforts and enjoyments, which are not to be had without it.

1. *Let us compare the condition of good and bad men in this world.* For poſſibly, if we do ſo, it may appear, that the irreligious, who mind nothing but the affairs of this world, have ſeldom even now, upon the whole, any great advantage or ſuperiority above the truly good and virtuous.

It

It is true, there are ſome inſtances of bad men, or of ſuch as concern themſelves about nothing more than a form of Godlineſſe, who have a great deal of outward worldly proſperity: and there are ſome good men in very low and mean circumſtances, who meet with a great deal of worldly trouble and affliction. But it is not always ſo. Neither do all bad men proſper. Nor are all good men in adverſity. Succeſſe does not always attend unrighteous or hypocritical men in their unrighteous deſigns. If they are unſucceſsful: if they are diſappointed in their aims and purſuits, how diſtreſſed, then, is their condition! how great their grief and vexation! Which a good man avoids, or very much moderates upon like occaſions. SERM. IV.

Suppoſing the covetous and ambitious to proſper, and obtain the advantages they aim at; ſtill thoſe advantages are exceeding uncertain and vain. They cannot afford a great deal of ſatisfaction. For they are accompanied with cares and fears, and may be all loſt. If they are not loſt, they muſt be ſoon left: how ſoon, man knows not. *Riches*, as the wiſe man obſerves, *certainly make to themſelves* Pr. xxiii. 5.

SERM. IV. *themſelves wings. They flee away as an eagle towards heaven.* And, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *Man*
Pſ. xlix. 12 *that is in honour, abideth not.*

There is no ſtability in earthly things, and but little ſatisfaction to be had from them, whilſt they are poſſeſſed. How unſettled, for the moſt part, is the condition of thoſe who are in places of honour and preferment! How numerous, and how watchful are their enemies and oppoſers! For which reaſon fears and jealouſies oftentimes perplex and torment the minds of thoſe who are in the moſt exalted ſtations. And though men are much advanced, the greater power, honour and ſplendour of ſome others may occaſion envie, pining grief and vexation. Whilſt men have many and great advantages, and almoſt every ingredient of worldly felicity, ſome one trouble or affliction, or a reſtleſs deſire of ſome one thing ſtill wanting, may imbitter every enjoyment.

There is not, then, any thing very tempting in the moſt ſplendid circumſtances of bad men.

2. It

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2. It ſhould be conſidered, *that there are many temporal worldly advantages, which do uſually attend the practice of piety, and which it is the means of.* Sobriety and temperance conduce to the health of the body, which is a very great bleſſing, and to the clearneſſe of the underſtanding, the vigour of the mind, and all the intellectual faculties.

The health of the body, which is a very great bleſſing, the clearneſſe of the underſtanding, the vigour of the mind and all its intellectual faculties attend upon, and are fruits of piety. Sobriety, with frugality and diligence, will ordinarily go a great way toward obtaining and ſecuring a competence of all things needful and convenient. And the meek ſhall inherit the earth. Mildneſſe of diſpoſition and temper, and moderate affections, conduce to health and long life. Theſe alſo, together with a prudent and agreeable behaviour toward all thoſe we converſe with, if they advance not to honour, will procure the favour and good will of ſome, and good repute with the wiſe and diſcerning. *He that will love life*, ſays St. Peter, *and ſee good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they ſpeak no guile. Let him* 1 Pet. iii. 10—12.

SERM. IV. *him eſchew evil, and do good; let him ſeek peace and enſue it. For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is againſt them that do evil.*

Pr. xvi. 3. It is the advice of Solomon: *Commit thy ways unto the Lord, and thy thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed.*

—ver. 7. Again: *When a man's ways pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him.*

Eccl. viii. 1. He alſo obſerves; *A man's wiſdom maketh his face to ſhine.* Which is not more true of that part of wiſdom, which conſiſts in knowledge and underſtanding, and an ability to reſolve difficult queſtions, than in that wiſdom, which conſiſts in a virtuous conduct, and a mild, diſcreet and obliging behaviour among men. Goodneſſe and beneficence ſecure men reſpect in the time of their proſperity. And if their circumſtances change, and they be brought into trouble, they will ſtill be beloved and eſteemed, and they will meet with ſome to protect and ſupply them, and intereſt themſelves in their favour, as the exigence of their caſe requires.

3. Another thing to be ſaid in the behalf of Godlineſſe is, that *it tends to prevent, or ſecure from many evils.* This is implied in the laſt-

mentioned particular. Let me however ſhew this more diſtinctly. SERM. IV.

Many evils, ſome inward, others outward, are prevented by the ſeveral branches of piety. The ſober and temperate avoid the bad effects and conſequences of intemperance and licentiouſneſſe. He who governs his paſſions and affections lives free from many uneaſineſſes and diſquietudes that torment and pierce others, of ungoverned affections and paſſions. The truly pious man, that is not ambitious of honour and preferment, ſtate and grandeur, who is not covetous, who enlarges not his deſires after much wealth and large revenues, avoids ſolicitude and perplexity. The humble man, that overlooks neglects and ungrateful returns and ſome ſcornful and diſdainful treatment, poſſeſſeth himſelf in peace, when others deſtitute of that virtue are rendered unhappie, or rather make themſelves unhappie, by the miſconduct of other men.

The meek and patient, who can paſs by, or bear with ſome injuries and offences, avoid ſtrife and contention, and all the diſagreeable conſequences thereof, and the train of evils that attend them. Ungoverned exceſſive anger,

SERM. IV. deep and laſting reſentment, beſide the inward uneaſineſſe they produce, oftentimes involve men in great and inextricable difficulties, which might have been avoided. And whilſt the man of ungoverned paſſion loſes the favour and affection of friends, the mild and diſcreet ſubdues the hearts of enemies, and gains their good will and eſteem.

4. Laſtly, *Good men have many comforts and enjoyments, which others are deſtitute of.* Solomon recommending wiſdom, openly declares, (not at all fearing to diſappoint thoſe who ſhould hearken to his council, and make the experiment) *Her ways are ways of pleaſantneſſe, and all her paths are peace. She is a tree of life to them that lay hold upon her; and happie is every one that retaineth her.* And in another place he ſays: *A good man ſhall be ſatisfied from himſelf.*

Pr. iii. 17, 18.

—xiv. 14.

A diſcreet and thoughtful perſon, who has conſidered the nature of religion, and the extent of its precepts and obligations: who has formed to himſelf juſt ſentiments concerning God and the way of ſerving him: and who does actually perform the duties ſuited to his

capacities and circumſtances; revering, ho- SERM. IV.
noring, and worſhipping God, infinite in perfection, and the fountain of all good; loving, relieving, helping, his fellow-creatures, according to his power, with fidelity and readineſſe; will ordinarily enjoy much peace and tranquility of mind.

If at any time he has been miſled from the paths of virtue, he has now repented of all his ſins, and truſts in the forgiving grace and mercie of God, who pardons and accepts repenting and returning ſinners: And he keeps himſelf in his favour by carefully avoiding all known ſin, and performing ſincerely every known duty.

He has now the pleaſure of integrity, though not of perfection. And being in the frame of his mind and the conduct of his life, obedient and conformed to the will of God, he has a perſuaſion of his favour and acceptance, which is the trueſt joy and ſatisfaction.

Such an one is happie in every circumſtance. Alteration of outward condition will not utterly deſtroy his peace and tranquility, ſatisfaction,

SERM. IV. comfort, and joy. The ſentiments and language of the Pſalmiſt are thoſe of all good men in ge-

Pſ. iv. 6. 7. neral. *There be many that ſay: Who will ſhew us any good? Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. Thou haſt put gladneſſe in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine encreaſed.*

If he is in proſperity, he owns God to be the giver of every good and perfect gift, and with delight offers up to him ſacrifices of praiſe and thanks.

Is he brought into trouble and affliction? He has reſources of peace and comfort, which others want. He ſtill truſts in God, and caſts his care upon him. He has a great deal of comfort in the conſideration, and full perſuaſion, that the providence of God, who is righteous, and loveth righteouſneſſe, is over all: And he thereupon concludes, that all things ſhall be over-ruled for the good of thoſe, who adhere to the laws of reaſon and virtue.

As ſpiritual good is in itſelf, and in his eſteem, the moſt valuable good, and durable happineſſe

in a future ſtate is the ultimate end of man; he is reconciled to preſent afflictions, by conſidering them as the chaſtiſements of his heavenly Father, appointed, and laid upon him, for making him more pure and perfect, and more meet for unmixed happineſſe: or even for ſecuring his welfare and ſafety, and preventing his ruin, that he might not finally periſh with the world of thoughtleſs and inconſiderate men. SERM. IV.

Certainly, when under afflictions, he will have different thoughts and apprehenſions concerning them from what others have. His affections were not before ſo ſet upon this world and the things of it, as thoſe of ſome others are: though, poſſibly, he too has exceeded in his regard for them. However, his moderation of affection for them is now of great benefit. And theſe things never having been eſteemed as his ſole or main portion, he is not ſo totally dejected and diſconcerted, as ſome others are in like circumſtances. This is no ſmall advantage in a world, where all things are uncertain, and the circumſtances of men frequently vary and alter.

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And if he actually find afflictions to be of uſe to him, of ſervice to his ſpiritual intereſts, he is mightily reconciled to them. His troubles may appear almoſt ſhocking and unſufferable to other men, and the meanneſſe of his outward circumſtances may lead them to deſpiſe him. Still he can be pleaſed, if he find himſelf humbled in the frame of his mind, more affected with the evil of ſin, more fully determined for the ſervice of God, and the performance of every duty lying before him. He is ſatisfied, if theſe afflictions have proved the means of ſuch good, and have better fitted and prepared him for that world, where all ſorrow and ſighing ſhall flee away: which they never will here. In this manner therefore *David* ſpeaks of the troubles he had met with: *It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy ſtatutes. I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right; and that thou in faithfulneſſe haſt afflicted me.*

Pſ. cxix. 71. —ver. 75.

This is ſaid, with regard to the common afflictions and troubles of this life.

But farther, are good men brought into difficulties, on account of the profeſſion of truth, and

and acting agreeably to convictions of their conſcience, and deliberate judgment concerning things? Upon ſuch an occaſion they have ſpecial ſupports and conſolations. They have now a ſtrong perſuaſion, that their faithfulneſſe is well-pleaſing and acceptable to God. And they have a humble hope, that if they can perſevere to the end; they ſhall be ſaved, and receive an abundant reward. SERM. IV.

The declarations of ſcripture upon this head are full of comfort and encouragement to all who are brought into this trial. *My brethren,* ſays St. James, *count it all joy, when ye fall into divers temptations: knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.* St. *Paul* encountered many difficulties in the ſervice of true religion. And the acknowledgements he had made with regard to his own and others experience, who laboured with him at that time, are very obſervable. *As the ſufferings of Chriſt abound in us, ſo our conſolation alſo aboundeth by Chriſt. And we rejoice in hope of the glorie of God. And not only ſo, but we glory in tribulations alſo, knowing, that tribulation worketh pa-* Jam. i. 2, 3. 2 Cor. i. 5. Rom. v. 3—5.

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tience, and patience experience, and experience hope. And hope maketh not aſhamed, becauſe the love of God is ſhed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghoſt, which is given unto us. In another place:

2 Cor. iv. 16—18. *For which cauſe we faint not. But though our outward man periſh, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glorie: whilſt we look not at the things which are ſeen, but at the things which are not ſeen. For the things which are ſeen, are temporal: but the things which are not ſeen, are eternal.*

Whereby we perceive the true and effectual bleſſing, which our Lord bequeathed his diſciples:

John xiv. 27. *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

John xvi. 33. *Theſe things I have ſpoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye will have tribulation. But be of good chear: I have overcome the world.* And the Pſalmiſt of old could ſay: *Great peace have they that love thy law; and nothing ſhall offend them.*

As

As a good man, of any rank, in any ſtate and condition, proceeds and perſeveres in the practice of piety and virtue, he has an encreaſing joy. His perſeverance in the way of God's commandment, and continued reſpect to the divine precepts, confirms the perſuaſion of his integrity, and he aſſures his heart before God. His peace and ſatisfaction are very likely to prevail more and more, toward the period of his time here on earth. For he has pleaſing reflections and comfortable proſpects, to which others are ſtrangers, and which others cannot have. So ſays the Pſalmiſt: *Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.* And this is an important point, to conclude well. SERM. IV. Pſ. xxxvii. 37.

All which conſiderations, I preſume, ſufficiently prove the truth of the obſervation in the text; that *Godlineſſe is profitable for all things, having promiſe of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come.*

Having now ſufficiently conſidered the ſeveral propoſitions of the text, I ſhall conclude with ſome inferences by way of application.

1. *We*

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1. *We may hence learn to be cautious, how we paſs any ſevere cenſures upon men on account of the diſadvantages of their preſent condition, or the outward troubles and afflictions, which they meet with here.* This inference follows juſtly from things before ſaid. This is not a ſtate of recompenſe, but trial: All things, all outward things, come very much alike to all. There is no knowing good and evil, love and hatred, certainly, by thoſe things which befall men here. Nor are all men miſerable, who lie under external diſadvantages. Some may be greatly afflicted, as we have ſeen, and yet be peaceful, joyful and comfortable. Some may meet with many and long continued troubles and afflictions, who yet are not abandoned of God, but approved by him: who are ſincere and upright, and perſuaded of their acceptance with God. There are good reaſons for ſuch a diſpenſation. Valuable ends and purpoſes are anſwered thereby. Good men are improved and made better by the ſufferings they endure. Others of more imperfect virtue are made more perfect, and learn from them the duty of patience and reſignation. And many by obſerving the great examples of patience and fortitude of ſome good men under various trials, may

may be convinced and perſuaded of the truth, power and excellence of the principles of religion. SERM. IV.

2. *Young perſons, and others, who are diſpoſed to ſeek and ſerve the Lord, and to walk in the way of his commandments, may be hence convinced, that they have no reaſon to be diſheartened and diſcouraged, as if they ſhould find no pleaſure, and obtain no advantages in the way of religion and virtue.* I hope ſuch will be pleaſed to conſider ſeriouſly what has been ſaid. For a principal deſign of theſe diſcourſes has been to remove ſuch a prejudice againſt religion, and ſhew fully, that it is falſe and groundleſs: and to perſuade men to come to a ſpeedy and immediate determination for virtue, which is really profitable for all things.

3. However, certainly, *it is very fit and prudent, at firſt ſetting out in the way of virtue, and taking upon us the profeſſion of true religion, to conſider the outward diſadvantages and ſufferings, that may attend ſuch a courſe, and do ſometimes befall the ſincere and conſcientious.* By this means we become prepared for all events. Our

SERM. IV. Our reſolutions are more confirmed; our obedience will be the more uniform; and a good iſſue becomes more likely. We ſhall not only begin, but alſo finiſh well. The path of ſuch will be as the morning light, that ſhineth more and more unto the perfect day.

4. *It ſeems to be a probable truth, that the higheſt attainments in virtue and holineſſe, will have the largeſt ſhare of comfort and happineſſe in this preſent life.* The moſt compleat in virtue will obtain many advantages, and eſcape many evils, and have the beſt ſupports and conſolations. For theſe know beſt how, and are beſt able to truſt in God. They are moſt reſigned to his will. They have the moſt lively hope of an heavenly and everlaſting inheritance. They, uſually, have the moſt comfortable perſuaſion of the divine favour and acceptance. Their affections are the moſt mortified to earthly and ſenſible things. They have the fulleſt command of their appetites and paſſions. They have leſs anxiety and ſolicitude about earthly things. They are beſt contented with their condition. They are freeſt from envie, ill-will, jealouſie, and other troubleſome and tormenting emotions and diſeaſes of

of the mind. This ſoundneſſe and vigorous health of the ſoul cannot but have delightful effects. As then Godlineſſe is profitable for all things, the greateſt attainments in piety will uſually have the beſt portion of comfort in the life that now is, as well as the greateſt reward in the life which is to come. SERM. IV.

5. *Let us not, then, having begun well, be ever induced by any means to forſake the practice of piety.* Let us not take offence at the troubles and afflictions, which may for a while lie upon us, or upon ſome others, who are ſincerely devoted to the ſervice of God. For it is a certain truth, that Godlineſſe is profitable unto all things. If we perſevere and advance therein, we ſhall be more and more convinced of this truth, *that light is ſown for the righteous, and gladneſſe for the upright in heart.* Let us not then be impoſed upon by ſome ſpecious appearances, or put in for a portion with every one, who makes a ſhew of mirth and gaity. Let not any thing tranſport us beyond the bounds of ſerious thought and conſideration. If we weigh things carefully in an equal balance, piety will have the preference in our judgment above irreligion and wickedneſſe.

And

SERM. IV. And knowing the inconſtance of our tempers, and the dangerous tendence of ſome worldly temptations, we ſhall be earneſt with God, to eſtabliſh the good and wiſe purpoſes of our heart, once ſeriouſly formed: to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken us in his precepts.

The juſt ſentiments of the Apoſtle in this text and context deſerve our notice. He ſpeaks lightly of *bodily exerciſe*, as a ſmall matter: whilſt he highly prizes, and earneſtly recommends ſincere piety. And he cenſures ſuch as ſhould *forbid to marry* and require men *to abſtain from meats, which God has created to be received with thankſgiving*. It is the ſame, which our Saviour ſaid and taught in the hearing of all the people: *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man: but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.* The Chriſtian religion, which is true religion only, inſiſts not upon grievous auſterities, and ſevere, and unneceſſarie mortifications of the body. Chriſtians, if they underſtand their religion, are free from all ſuch yokes of bondage or ſlavery, which are below ingenuous minds. And it certainly is no ſmall advantage to be freed from

Mat. xv. 11.

from burdenſome impoſitions, and needleſs re- SERM. IV.
ſtraints of this kind; and to be able without ſcandal to partake of all the innocent enjoyments of life: provided men do not ſet up ſome other ſort of orthodoxie, as vain and inſignificant; equally unprofitable to thoſe who pride themſelves in it, and equally troubleſome to the world around them.

6. Finally, let us exerciſe ourſelves unto Godlineſſe. *Bodily exerciſe profiteth little.* It has no divine Goſpel promiſe of any good thing whatever. *But Godlineſſe is profitable unto all things:* and has promiſes of life and happineſſe hereafter, and of peace, joy and comfort here. Let us exerciſe and improve ourſelves in this true excellence, by meditation and prayer, watchfulneſſe and circumſpection: reſtraining irregular appetites, purifying ourſelves more and more, and adding one virtue to another, being ready to every good word and every good work, and growing daily more perfect in ſobriety, meekneſſe, patience, and every other part of true real piety.

SERMON

SERMON V.

Internal Marks of Credibility in the New Teſtament.

2 PETER i. 15, 16.

Moreover, I will endeavour that you may be able after my Deceaſe, to have theſe things always in Remembrance.

—16. *For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty.*

SERM. V.

WE are ſetting before you, the grounds upon which we receive the Chriſtian religion as true and divine. No religion can come from God which contains principles, or rules of life unworthie

of him; part of this deſign therefore is, to ſhew the excellency of the principles of our religion, and the goodneſſe of its precepts: that they are ſuitable to the divine perfections, and ſuch as may proceed from him, without any derogation to him; if not ſuch as could come from none but God himſelf. Another part of the deſign is, to conſider the miracles ſuppoſed to be wrought by our Saviour, and his Apoſtles, and the predictions of uncertain events, as atteſtations of a divine commiſſion for giving theſe religious inſtructions to mankind. SERM. V.

But it is needful we have ſome ſatisfactorie proof of the truth and realitie of theſe. They who were eye-witneſſes of any wonderful works, are ſatisfied by their own ſenſes: but for us, who live many ages after the promulgation, and ſuppoſed atteſtation of this religion, it is neceſſarie we conſider what evidence there is of the account we have of them. There being no miracles wrought before us for the confirmation of our religion, we ought to be convinced of the truth of thoſe that were done in the firſt ages of it. If it be made appear, that many extraordinarie works were done as

SERM. V. proofs of a commiſſion from heaven, that predictions were made of diſtant and uncertain events, which were afterwards accompliſhed, this will prove the divine original of the Chriſtian religion. What lies before me therefore is to ſhew, that the account we have of theſe things in the hiſtorie of the Goſpel, and particularly in the books of the New Teſtament, is credible, and ſuch as may be received by impartial and unprejudiced perſons: that *Jeſus Chriſt* dwelt in *Judea*, and, in the name of God, taught the moſt pure and excellent principles of religion, work'd many miracles, healing all kinds of diſtempers by his word, raiſing the dead, and the like: that he foretold many uncertain events, which afterwards came to paſs;—his own death, reſurrection, the pouring out of the Holy Ghoſt on his followers, with power to do the like, or greater works than he had done himſelf; the converſion of the world to his doctrine, and the deſtruction of the Jewiſh ſtate: that he was crucified, roſe from the dead, and aſcended up to Heaven: that his Apoſtles and others, after this, did work many miracles by powers they received from him, and propagated in a great

great part of the world the doctrine he taught. SERM. V.

The particular conſideration of the miracles and predictions of our Saviour and his Apoſtles, is in other hands. What lies before us at preſent is, the credibility of the account we have of them, and of the riſe of our religion. That it is not a forged and invented ſtorie, but a faithful narrative of matters of fact; for we have not followed cunningly deviſed fables, as the Apoſtle here ſaies, but have delivered to you only an account of what we ſaw done before our eyes: and he ſaies it when he was in expectation of leaving this world in a very ſhort time: *Knowing that ſhortly I muſt put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jeſus Chriſt hath ſhewed me.* —ver. 14. St. *Luke* likewiſe avers, in the beginning of his Goſpel, that he had perfect underſtanding from the firſt, of the things concerning which he was about to write: —chap. i. 2, 3. and St. *John* ſaies, in the beginning of his firſt epiſtle, *that which we have ſeen and heard, declare we unto you.*

I propoſe to ſet before you the internal marks and characters there are of truth and probabi-

SERM. V. lity in the account itſelf, the Hiſtorie of the New Teſtament.

1. I would juſt obſerve, that *the books we receive this hiſtorie from, have the names of particular perſons; and this is an argument they are genuine, when there is no particular reaſon to the contrary.* The poſitive proofs which there are, of their being really wrote by the perſons whoſe names they bear, belong to another argument. All that I inſiſt upon now is, that they were handed down to us in the names of the perſons who take upon them this character of living at the time the things they relate were tranſacted.

As for the four Goſpels, the names of their ſeveral authors are not indeed inſerted in them. Two of them, *Matthew* and *John*, were of the twelve Diſciples, and followers of *Chriſt*: *Mark* was a companion of *Peter*, in his travels and preaching: and *Luke* was a companion of *Paul*. Some have ſuppoſed, they were both of them of the ſeventy-two that were ſent forth by our Saviour in his life-time. In the epiſtles, the name of the writer is inſerted in the ſalutation of the perſon to whom they are ſent, excepting

cepting that one of the epiſtle to the Hebrews, which, if wrote by *Paul*, as is generally ſuppoſed, might be omitted for ſpecial reaſons. SERM. V.

2. *Theſe books are wrote in a language and in a ſtyle ſuitable to the character of the Perſons whoſe name they bear.* The language is Greek, which obtained very much in that countrie, in *Syria* and *Judea*, and in *Egypt*, after the conqueſt of *Alexander* and the diviſion of the countries he had ſubdued amongſt his generals. The language is Greek, but ſome words are uſed in a different ſenſe from what they have in the ancient writers that dwelt in *Greece* and its colonies, and there are ſome few Syriac words, and ſome borrowed from the Roman language, and there are phraſes that have ſomewhat of the Syriac or Chaldee idiom.

3. *Here are many characters of time inſerted, which are arguments that it is a real hiſtorie of facts. There was,* ſaith St. *Luke, in the daies of Herod the king of Judea, a certain prieſt named Zacharias, of the courſe of Abia.* The time of our Saviour's birth is ſet down with particular characters by the ſame Evangeliſt. *And it came to paſs in thoſe daies, that there went out a* —chap. i, 5. —chap. ii, 1, 2.

SERM. V. *decree from Cæſar Auguſtus, that all the world ſhould be taxed*; not only the citie of *Rome*, but all the provinces of the empire. *(And this taxing was firſt made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria)*, or, as the words ought to be rendered, according to the judgment of the beſt critics; *this taxing was before that, made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria*, to diſtinguiſh it from that which was really made ten years after, and which proved very fatal to the Jewiſh nation, by the ſedition raiſed upon the occaſion of it by *Judas Gaulonites*, and which gave riſe to the troubles that laſted a long time. St. *Matthew* ſays likewiſe: *Now when Jeſus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the daies of Herod the king.* The firſt preaching of *John* the Baptiſt has likewiſe very particular characters of time ſpecified. *Now in the fifteenth year of Tiberius Cæſar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea, and the region of Trachonitis, and Lyſanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high prieſts; the word of God came unto John the ſon of Zacharias in the Wilderneſs. At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jeſus.* And in the Acts of the

—chap. ii. 1.

Luke iii. 1, 2.

Mat. xiv. 1.

the Apoſtles we have an account of the oppoſition raiſed by the Jews againſt *Paul* at *Jeruſalem*; of his being taken out of their hands by *Claudius Lyſias* the chief captain; of his being ſent by him to *Felix* at *Ceſarea*; and, of his being delivered up by him to *Portius Feſtus* his ſucceſſor. All theſe are ſuch marks of time, as give ſome appearance of a true hiſtorie of facts.—But to proceed: SERM. V.

4. *The great deſign of this hiſtorie, and of the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, has nothing in it that ſhould tempt men to forgerie, and invention.* The deſign evidently purſued is, the rectifying the conceptions of men, relating to the nature of God, and the way of worſhipping him; to convince them of their ſins, and to turn them from them. Men are informed of their duty, exhorted to repentance. The Jews are admoniſhed, not to depend upon external privileges, but to bring forth fruits meet for repentance. Gentils are exhorted to turn from idols, and all abominable vices. The ſtricteſt regimen of thoughts and affectations, of words and actions, is enjoyned, upon the ſole conſideration of a regard to God and a future account. Had it been an attempt to

SERM. V. erect a civil government, or an eccleſiaſtical polity, there might have been ſome ground of ſuſpicion of the miracles urged in its favour; though a bare ſuſpicion muſt have given way to plain proofs. And, indeed, the Goſpel has this advantage of the Moſaic diſpenſation. His commiſſion was manifeſtly proved by the wonderful things he wrought. But he formed a numerous people into political government, and ſettled an honorable prieſthood in his family upon his brother, and his deſcendants. But the Goſpel deſign, as repreſented in the New Teſtament, will not ſuggeſt any ſuſpicions to them that obſerve it. This is all I urge at preſent, that the great deſign promoted in this hiſtorie, does not ſeem to carry in it, any temptation to forgery and invention.

5. *We have in this hiſtorie, in the books of the New Teſtament, a very natural repreſentation of things, with all the appearances of likelihood and probabilitie.* The chief ſubject of the four Goſpels are, our Saviour's diſcourſes and miracles; his hiſtorie and reſurrection; the reception he met with, the reflections the people made upon him, the exceptions of the people and Phariſees againſt him, all which are ſuitable

to

to the character of the perſons, and the principles that obtained among them. When they had heard ſome of his diſcourſes, the people ſoon apprehended a difference between his doctrine and that they had been wont to hear from their Rabbies. *When Jeſus had ended theſe ſayings, the people were aſtoniſhed at his doctrine; for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the Scribes.* After, he is ſaid to have cured divers infirmities, reſtored ſight to the blind, and ſpeech to the dumb, and delivered ſome that were poſſeſſed with evil ſpirits. After he had wrought ſome cures, it is highly reaſonable to ſuppoſe he ſhould have a concourſe of people flock to him, to reap benefit from his hands. *And great multitudes came unto him, having with them thoſe that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and caſt them down at Jeſus' feet; and he healed them: inſomuch that the multitude wondered, when they ſaw the dumb to ſpeak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to ſee: and they glorified the God of Iſrael. The multitude marvelled, ſaying, it was never ſo ſeen in Iſrael: but the Phariſees ſaid, he caſteth out the devils through the prince of the devils.* Some were offended at the meanneſs

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Mat. vii. 28, 29.

Mat. xv. 30, 31.

Mat. ix. 33, 34.

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Mat. xiii. 54—57. *hath this man this wiſdom, and theſe mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's ſon? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joſes, and Simon, and Judas? And his ſiſters, are they not all with us? whence then hath this man all theſe things? And they*
John vi. 41, 42. *were offended at him. The Jews then murmured at him, becauſe he ſaid, I am the bread which came down from heaven: and they ſaid, Is not this Jeſus the ſon of Joſeph, whoſe father and mother we know? how is it then that he ſaith, I*
John vii. 12—15. *came down from heaven.* Again: *And there was much murmuring among the people concerning him:* (*viz.* at *Jeruſalem*) *for ſome ſaid he is a good man; others ſaid, nay, but he deceiveth the people. Howbeit, no man ſpake openly of him* (*i. e.* in favour of him) *for fear of the Jews. Now about the midſt of the feaſt, Jeſus went up into the temple, and taught: and the Jews marvelled; ſaying, How knoweth this man letters,*
—ver. 31. *having never learned? And many of the people believed on him, and ſaid, When Chriſt cometh, will he do more miracles than this man hath done?*
—ver. 40, 41. *Many of the people therefore, when they heard this ſaying, ſaid, Of a truth, this is the Prophet: others ſaid, This is the Chriſt: but ſome ſaid, Shall Chriſt*

Chriſt come out of Gallilee? The ninth chapter of St. *John*'s Goſpel is an account of the miracle wrought upon a blind man whom he reſtored to ſight; the ſcruples of divers of the people; the inquiſitiveneſs of the Phariſees about it; the ſhyneſs of the parents of the blind man to anſwer all their queſtions; the reflections of the Phariſees; the reply of the blind man, are altogether ſo natural, that the ſtory can be nothing elſe but a bare repreſentation of a real matter of fact: the chapter cannot be abridged, but may be read at your leiſure, with the view for which I refer to it with great ſatisfaction. *There was a diviſion*, or argument, *among the Jews for theſe ſayings. And many of them ſaid; he hath a devil, and is mad; Why hear ye him? Others ſaid, Theſe are not the words of one that hath a devil. Can a devil open the eyes of the blind?* And, at ſome times, great numbers of people were ſo moved by the ſight of his miracles, and the new and ſurpriſing nature of his diſcourſes, that they entertained a very ſtrong perſuaſion he muſt be the deliverer they expected, and therefore invited him to take the authority and ſtate of a king, and undertake to deliver them from the Roman government; particularly after he had

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John x. 19—21.

SERM. V. had fed five thouſand with five loaves and a
John vi. 14, 15. few ſmall fiſhes, *When they had ſeen the miracle which Jeſus had done, ſaid, This is of a truth that Prophet that ſhould come into the world.* So that percieving *they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he* was obliged to depart *into a mountain alone*, to fruſtrate this their deſign, ſo contrary to all his intentions. At another time, great numbers are ſaid to have conducted him in triumph in-
Mat. xxi. 8, 9. to *Jeruſalem: And a very great multitude ſpread their garments in the way, others cut down branches from the trees and ſtrawed them in the way. And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cryed, ſaying, Hoſanna to the ſon of David: bleſſed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hoſanna in the higheſt.* Nevertheleſs, as the multitude are variable in their affections, and as the Jewiſh people were in great ſubjection to the Phariſees, and their rulers the inveterate enemies of our Saviour, and being, it is likely, tired out with his delays to take upon him temporal authority, and make ſome change in the government, as they expected he ſhould, they at laſt cried out,
Mat. xxvii 20. "Crucify him! Crucify him!" deſired the life of *Barabbas*, and that *Jeſus* ſhould be de-

5 ſtroyed,

ſtroyed. But though the common people were divided in their opinion concerning him, and varied at times in their affection for him, the Phariſees are repreſented as ſteadily oppoſing him with the greateſt malice from the firſt to the laſt. He had with great freedom corrected their miſrepreſentations of the law; cenſured their additions to it, which were ſuch as to ſubvert and make void the main branches of it; rebuked them for their pride and ambition, and hypocriſie. It is very likely therefore, they ſhould be implacable to him, as they are repreſented, and ſeek all opportunities to defame and deſtroy him. When ſome of their officers, whom they had ſent out to apprehend him, returned without executing their orders, and expreſſed ſome approbation of his diſcourſes, they anſwered, ſaying, *Are ye alſo deceived? Have any of the rulers, or of the Phariſees believed on him? But this people, who know not the law, are curſed.* And they were continually making thoſe exceptions againſt him, which might have a tendency to make him odious to the people. *Then came to Jeſus, Scribes and Phariſees, which were at Jeruſalem, ſaying, Why do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the elders? for they waſh not*

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John vii. 47, 48.

Mat. xv. 1, 2.

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Mat. ix. 11.

Mark ii. 18.

Mark ii. 23.

The repreſentation of the apprehenſions of the Diſciples concerning our Saviour, are extremely natural: from the words they had heard him ſpeak; from the manner in which he taught; from the many wonderful works they had ſeen him perform; thence they entertained

tained a ſtrong perſuaſion he muſt be the *Meſ-* SERM. V.
ſias; and when he enquired what thoughts they had of him, they readily replied, that he was *Jeſus* the Son of the living God. But when he ſpoke to them of his ſufferings, that the ſon of man ſhould be delivered into the hands of men, and they ſhould kill him, and after that he was killed, he ſhould riſe again the third day; they underſtood not that ſaying, and were afraid to aſk him: *Mark* ix. 31, 32. And in divers other places. They were poſſeſſed with the common prejudices of their countrymen, and were in continual expectation of ſeeing him in the higheſt ſplendour and power. This was the thing that was twice the foundation of the hopes they had of authority and power themſelves as his favourites, ſince they were his intimate acquaintance and conſtant companions. This was the reaſon of their abandoning him at the laſt, under his diſgrace and ſufferings; and by this we may account for *Peter*'s denial of his maſter, when he ſaw him ſubmit to trouble he had no expectation of. This was likewiſe the reaſon of the great difficulty there was of convincing them it was really he, when he came among them after his reſurrection. I might refer to the moving

SERM. V. ſcene, that paſt between our Saviour and his Diſciples the night before his being apprehended. The ſorrow they all manifeſted upon the declaration he made of the near approach of his death; the conſolations he ſuggeſted to them; the prayer he put up for them; the profeſſions they made of affection for him; the warnings he gave them; the promiſes they made of fidelity to him, and that they would rather die with him than deny him: are all ſuch as none can read, I ſhould think, but muſt be perſuaded, it is no other than a faithful narrative of a real tranſaction. The declaration likewiſe that *Peter* made, Mark xiv. 29. though all ſhould be offended he would not, was agreeable to the forwardneſs and zeal he had ſhown upon divers other occaſions. And are not the ſcoffs of the people, and the triumphs of the Phariſees, ſaid to be delivered by them againſt our Saviour when hanging upon the croſs, juſt ſuch as might be expected upon the occaſion from the cruel inſolence of one Mat. xxvii 39—42. and the malicious ſatisfaction of the other? *And they that paſſed by, reviled him, wagging their heads, and ſaying, Thou that deſtroyeſt the temple, and buildeſt it in three days, ſave thyſelf: If thou be the Son of God, come down from the croſs.*

croſs. Likewiſe alſo the chief prieſts mocking him, with the ſcribes and elders, ſaid, He ſaved others, himſelf he cannot ſave: if he be the king of Iſrael, let him now come down from the croſs, and we will believe him. He truſted in God: let him deliver him now if he will have him: for he ſaid, I am the Son of God. And though I paſs over many particulars, I muſt not omit to refer you to his compaſſionate lamentation of the miſeries of *Jeruſalem* and the Jewiſh nation, when the prediction of their deſtruction by him is related; which could proceed from no other but one who was really the perſon the Evangeliſts have repreſented our Saviour to be. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneth them which are ſent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it; ſaying, If thou hadſt known, even thou, at leaſt in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.*

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Mat. xxiii. 37.

Luke xix. 41, 42.

If we proceed to the Hiſtory of the Acts of the Apoſtles, we ſhall find ſtill the ſame juſt

SERM. V. and natural repreſentation of things. The charge ſaid to be made againſt *Stephen* by the leading men of the Jewiſh nation, was the moſt popular that could be imagined, and moſt likely to reconcile the people to his deſtruction, which they aimed at. *And they ſtirred up the people, and the elders, and the ſcribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him before the council, and ſet up falſe witneſſes againſt him, which ſaid, This man ceaſeth not to ſpeak blaſphemous words againſt this place and the law.*

Acts vi. 12, 13.

The reception *Barnabas* and *Paul* met with at *Lyſtra* is as agreeable to the ſentiments of ſuperſtitious Heathens, ſurpriſed at firſt into ſuch a high veneration for them, upon account of a miracle they had ſeen them work: that they were ready to pay them ſuch honours as they gave their deities, and were as ſoon inraged againſt them when they diſdained their idolatrous honours and denied their Gods. *When the people ſaw what Paul had done* (He had cured a man impotent in his feet, who had been a cripple from his mother's womb) *they lift up their voices, ſaying in the ſpeech of Lycaonia, the Gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of men.*

Acts xiv. 11.

But

But *when there came thither certain Jews from* SERM. V.
Antioch and Iconium, who perſuaded the people, they ſtoned Paul, and drew him out of the city, ſuppoſing he had been dead. And the uproar at —ver. 19.
Epheſus, upon the progreſſe *Paul* had made, in drawing off ſome perſons from the received ſuperſtition, was no other than might be expected in a city where the livelihood of a vaſt number of perſons depended upon the ſale of images and ſhrines of the goddeſs *Diana*. Acts xix.
This juſt and natural repreſentation of things is an argument of the truth and credibility of any hiſtorie; when the reflections, objections, and whole behaviour of perſons of the better and meaner ſort are all comformable to their ſeveral characters, the opinions and ſentiments that obtain among them, and the circumſtances they are ſuppoſed to be in.

6. *The impartiality of the Hiſtorie of the New Teſtament is another argument of its truth, and makes the whole appear credible.* This is a rare and uncommon character, and I think is not more conſpicuous in any hiſtorie than in this. I would give you ſome few inſtances of it under theſe three heads.

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1. Many things are here mentioned, that were in appearance, and in the eye of the world, diſadvantageous to our Saviour.

2. The writers have not omitted thoſe things that were really diſadvantageous to themſelves, and their companions, ſome of them in the eye of the world, and others really ſo; their own faults and miſcarriages.

3. There are many diſorders and miſcarriages mentioned among the firſt converts to Chriſtianity.

As to the firſt head, Things that were to outward appearance, and in the eye of the world, diſadvantageous to our Saviour, are, the low circumſtances of his parents; the mean accommodations of his birth; that when he appeared publickly to the world, his townſmen and near relations deſpiſed and rejected him; that among his followers, there were few who were conſiderable for their knowledge of the law, for wealth or dignity; that the rulers, the ſcribes, and Phariſees, diſowned his pretenſions, and oppoſed him continually; that ſome, who for a time followed him, afterwards

wards went off from him, and deſerted him; SERM. V.
that he was betrayed into the hands of the high prieſt and rulers, by one of thoſe who had been choſen out for his conſtant companions, and had had an intimacy with him; that he was crucified in the moſt ignominious manner with two malefactors. Had it been a ſtorie invented, theſe particulars had never been part of it. Had it been a contrivance, they would never have thought of recommending to the generality of the Jews, a perſon, whom their rulers, and that ſect which had the higheſt veneration among them, condemned and rejected; nor to the Gentils, a perſon diſowned and crucified by his own nation. Had the whole been a fiction, a crucifixion had certainly never been a part of the ſtorie. Had not they heard of the tranſlation of *Enoch?* Was not the aſſumption of *Elijah*, who was carried up to heaven in a chariot of fire, and horſes of fire, a model they might eaſily have followed and improved? Would not this have been much more glorious than a crucifixion, though afterwards ſucceeded by an aſcenſion? Was it poſſible this fact ſhould have been overlooked by any one perſon; much leſs by a college, or number of perſons, who had attempt-

2 Kings ii. 11.

SERM. V. ed an agreeable ſtorie to be recommended to mankind? Certainly their view could be no other than the relating of real matter of fact.

Another proof of their impartiality is, what they have mentioned really, or to appearance, diſadvantageous in their own character and conduct, and that of the other chief followers of *Chriſt*. They have inſerted in this account, the mean original and occupation of ſeveral of themſelves; that they were but fiſhermen; and the infamous employment of *Matthew*, who was a publican. Many of their own faults and failings are mentioned in ſuch a manner, that one would not imagine they had concealed any of the aggravating circumſtances of them: nor do they ſeem to have ſoftened the harſhneſs of the reprimands their maſter gave them: and many of them are ſuch as they might have kept a ſecret among themſelves. Some of them were originally known only to *Chriſt* and the twelve, and divers of them, but two or three of the number could be privy to. This account repreſents the twelve infected with ambitious views of honour in a temporal kingdom; they had a contention which of them ſhould be the greateſt: it was a diſpute

they

they had one with another as they were tra- SERM. V.
velling without other company. The importunate ambition of the two ſons of *Zebedee*, and their mother, for the firſt and ſecond poſt in the *Meſſiah*'s kingdom. Their fears and Mat. xviii. 20.
diffidence when they were in a ſtorm, though *Chriſt* was with them. How ſevere a rebuke have they given us an account of, which they received from *Chriſt*, when they had underſtood him to ſpeak concerning temporal proviſions, and he had been admoniſhing them concerning the leaven of the Phariſees. *Why* Mark viii. 17, 18.
reaſon ye, becauſe ye have brought no bread? perceive ye not yet, neither underſtand? Have ye your heart yet hardened? Having eyes, ſee ye not? And having ears, hear ye not? And do ye not remember? And what a contemptible figure did they make, whom *Chriſt* had left behind him when he went up into the mountain with *Peter*, *James and John*; for when he came down again, he found a great multitude about them, the Scribes and Phariſees queſtioning with them, and a man haſting to Mark ix. 15, 16.
him, bringing his ſon to him with a dumb ſpirit, telling him, *I ſpake to thy Diſciples, that they ſhould caſt him out, but they could not*; upon which they received that juſt reprimand

SERM. V. of their unbelief even before the multitude; Mat. xvii. 17. *Then Jeſus anſwered, ſaying, O faithleſs and perverſe generation, how long ſhall I be with you? how long ſhall I ſuffer you? Bring him hither to me.* And what could be more ſhameful then their forſaking *Chriſt*, and leaving him when he was apprehended by the officers of the high prieſt? except only the denial of *Peter*, repeated again and again, with circumſtances unbecoming a man of honour, a worſhipper of the true God, and much more in a companion and diſciple of *Chriſt*. Indeed, if the honour of any of them were to be conſulted, it was *Peter*'s: yet we find he is not ſpared at all, any more than the reſt. He was one of them whom *Chriſt* called to be with him at the firſt; had made the moſt expreſs declaration of his character; had been the firſt inſtrument of opening the Goſpel after our Saviour's reſurrection, both to Jews and Gentils; and yet we have as many ſhameful miſcarriages mentioned concerning him, as concerning any of the reſt. When *Jeſus began to* Mat. xvi. 21. *ſhew unto his diſciples, how that he muſt go unto Jeruſalem, and ſuffer many things of the elders, and chief prieſts, and ſcribes, and be killed, and be raiſed again the third day*; then *Peter* took upon

upon him to rebuke his maſter, as if what he had ſaid proceeded from melancholy fears that aroſe in his mind, and not from a certain knowledge of what was to befal him, ſaying, *Be it far from thee, Lord: this ſhall not be unto thee*: upon which he received the ſevereſt reprimand recorded, as given to any of the twelve: *But Jeſus turned and ſaid unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan, thou art an offence unto me; for thou ſavoreſt not the things which be of God, but thoſe that be of men.* He was doubtleſs engaged with the reſt in the contention for precedency: he was guilty of diffidence when *Chriſt* called to him to come to him upon the water: he was drowſie and overcome with ſleep when he was with *Chriſt* in the garden, when he was in an agonie that might have filled thoſe preſent with him with the higheſt concern, and tendereſt compaſſion for him: he diſowned *Chriſt* in a moſt hardy and peremptory manner, when his maſter was in his view, under an unrighteous perſecution, immediately after the warmeſt and moſt confident profeſſions of zeal and affection: and we have notice taken of a diſſimulation he was afterwards guilty of, in favour of the Chriſtians that were of the uncircumciſion, to the prejudice

SERM. V.

—ver. 22.

—ver. 23.

Gal. ii. 11, 12.

SERM. V. dice of the ſimplicity of the Goſpel. I might obſerve the contention between *Paul* and *Barnabas*, which is recorded in the Acts: ſo that though for a long time they had been companions in preaching the Goſpel, they ſeparated, and went aſſunder for the future.—But enough has been ſaid.

Laſtly. The impartiality of the hiſtorie appears in the accounts that are given of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity after our Saviour's aſcenſion. If we ſhould read the hiſtorie of any particular reign, filled with high encomiums of the poſture of affairs, and find it repreſented as a time wherein the arts of peace and war flouriſh; in which all arts and ſciences are promoted and encouraged by a wiſe and prudent adminiſtration: the government juſt and mild; the people tractable and obedient; no impediment in the counſels, nor miſcarriages in the execution; the negotiations abroad, as well as councils at home, managed with the utmoſt ſagacity; armies ever victorious; no interruption of commerce, nor diſaſters in war: No wonder if poſterity judge ſuch a performance a panegyrick, a romance, or any thing rather than a hiſtorie: or, if the accounts

accounts given of the ſtate of Chriſtianity in its infancy had reſembled the pictures which have been ſince drawn by ſome modern repreſentations of the manners of the firſt converts: that they were univerſally eminent, prodigies of virtue and piety, ſcarce any tokens of human frailty, with now and then a rapturous exclamation on the unanimity and harmony of ſentiments and affections that prevailed among them; one might very well have ſuſpected matters of fact muſt have been falſified and miſrepreſented; that it was a ſtorie very much improved, if not altogether invented. But this is not the caſe. In this, as well as in every other part of this hiſtorie, there appears a perfect impartiality. It is indeed related to the honour of the converts to Chriſtianity at *Jeruſalem*, that *the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one ſoul; neither ſaid any of them that ought of the things which he poſſeſſed was his own; but they had all things common: neither was there any among them that lacked; for as many as were poſſeſſors of lands or houſes, ſold them, and brought the prices of the things that were ſold, and diſtribution was made unto every man according as he had need.* And we may eaſily believe, there was ſuch an harmony

SERM. V.

Acts iv. 32—35.

SERM. V. mony among them at firſt, when the ſame author has acquainted us, that in a ſhort time afterwards, when the number of the diſciples Acts vi. 1. was multiplied, *there aroſe a marmuring of the Grecians*, or Helleniſts, *againſt the Hebrews, becauſe their widows were neglected in the daily miniſtration.* Nor can we have any reaſon to diſcredit the fore-mentioned account of the generoſity of them who were poſſeſſed of houſes and lands, that they put the price of them into a common ſtock, for the relief of thoſe that wanted. I ſay, we have no reaſon to doubt that this generoſity was general, when the ſame author has been ſo particular, as to record the diſſimulation of two of the number, of *Ananias* Acts v. 1. and *Sapphira*; who endeavoured to put a cheat upon the Apoſtles, and kept back a part of the price of their lands, when they pretended to make a contribution of the whole value. The prepoſterous fondneſs of the Hebrew converts for the rites and ceremonies of the Moſaic law, is likewiſe recorded; and the diſturbance they gave the Gentil converts on that account.

In the epiſtles of the Apoſtles, that have been handed down to us, are preſerved memorials

of many particulars, not very honorable to the first converts to Chriſtianity. The readineſs of the churches of *Galatia*, to depart from the purity and ſimplicity of the Goſpel. The ſcandalous diſorders of the church of *Corinth*, in ſome ſolemn parts of their worſhip; the contentions among them in behalf of their teachers; their prepoſterous uſe of the gift of tongues, proceeding from vanity and oſtentation; the unaccountable conceits of others, who depended upon an empty faith without works, and a ſpeculative knowledge without a ſuitable practice, referred to, in the epiſtles of St. *James* and St. *John*. Upon the whole, it ſeems moſt evident from the facts related in this hiſtorie of what ſeems diſadvantageous to *Chriſt* himſelf, what was ſo to the writers themſelves, and the firſt Chriſtians; that thoſe perſons from whom we have received theſe accounts, had a very particular regard to truth, and preferred its intereſt before all ſelfiſh conſiderations. SERM. V.

7. *The remarkable plainneſs and ſimplicity of the narration, is another argument, and internal character of the credibility of the hiſtorie.* Matters of fact, all related without any remarks

SERM. V. marks of the writers. There is, as one obſerves *, "no preparation of events; there are "no artful tranſitions, or connections; no ſet "character of perſons to be introduced; no re-"flections on paſt actions, nor the authors of "them; no excuſes or apologies for ſuch "things as a writer might probably foreſee "would ſhock and diſturb his readers; no co-"loured artifices or arguments to ſet off a doubt-"ful action, and reconcile it to ſome other, or "the character of the perſon that did it." Thus far, this author. How ſimple and plain, how free from all pomp and oſtentation is the beginning of every Goſpel. The writer enters immediately upon the matters of fact he has to relate, without any laboured introduction, without any attempt to raiſe the expectation, or engage the affections of the reader. If it had been an artificial ſtory, invented, and compoſed with deſign, we ſhould have many other particulars in it than now there are. They have not ſought out occaſions to inhance their maſter's honour. The former part of his life is almoſt entirely paſt

* *Gaſtrel*'s certainty of the Chriſtian revelation. page 52.

over, and, beſides his miraculous birth, the SERM. V.
obeyſance paid him by the wiſe men, and ſome extraordinary circumſtances at the temple at the purification of the virgin, ſcarce any notice of him from that time to his public appearance at about the age of thirty, excepting that one fact, of his arguing with the doctors Luk.ii.46
in the temple. Had it been a ſtorie forged and contrived, his infancy and youth had not been thus ſlightly paſſed over; we ſhould have had many accounts of wonderful preſervations, and a miraculous providence attending him all along; there would have been related divers omens and preſages of the figure he was afterwards to make in the world; numerous ſpecimens of a pregnant capacity and zeal: whereas the hiſtorians have almoſt immediately entered upon his public appearance; which was what mankind was chiefly concerned in. When they have mentioned the meanneſs of their Lord's circumſtances, or of their own original employment, they have added no apology for it, nor concerned themſelves to account for their maſter's choice of ſuch followers; many failings of their number related, but no vindication, apology, or mitigation added; nor have they filled their accounts with

tedious

SERM. V. tedious complaints of the injuſtice, malice, or unreaſonableneſs of their own, or their maſter's enemies; they have not beſtowed any ſet encomiums upon *Chriſt* himſelf. The character indeed that reſults from the facts they have mentioned, is the moſt perfect that can be conceived: but yet, here are no hints at the maſterly ſtrokes of his character; no enlarging on the juſtneſs, propriety, aptneſs, beauty of his parables; no enhancing of his miracles from the number, greatneſs of them, or the manner of their performance; but only a plain ſimple narrative of his diſcourſes and behaviour, with the reflexions that were made upon him by others, which are likewiſe delivered with a remarkable plainneſs and ſimplicity.

I may have dwelt too long upon theſe two or three particulars; but I own a diſcovery of naked ſimple truth in hiſtorie, is inchanting. It gives one uncommon delight to obſerve it in any hiſtorie, though of no extraordinary importance; one is ſo often diſguſted with that favour on the one ſide, ſpite and malice on the other, which do ſo continually occur in the works of the moſt celebrated hiſtorians of

of all ages and nations, of all ſects and religions. To find it therefore in the moſt early accounts of our religion, is a peculiar ſatisfaction; and though theſe accounts may be deſtitute of ſome ornaments, not altogether inconſiſtent with truth and faithfulneſs, yet they have what illuſtrates and recommends them much more than exactneſs of method, purity of ſtile, the harmony of periods, and the moſt elaborate and finiſhed oratory of ſet ſpeech, could ever have done. SERM. V.

There is but this one point of practice I would take this opportunity to recommend to you; and that is, the frequent and diligent reading of the ſcriptures, eſpecially of the New Teſtament; and that you would not read them now and then a chapter; but ſome large portions at a time, when you have leiſure, and find yourſelves diſpoſed for ſerious conſideration, and beſt fitted for making reflections. You might thus for yourſelves, make ſuch remarks, whereby you might be charmed with the natural repreſentation of things, the plain ſimplicity of the narration, and be more fully convinced of the credibility of the whole narration, and conſequently be more perſuaded

SERM. V. of the truth and divine original of that religion you profeſs, which is the foundation of comfort, under the troubles and afflictions you are exerciſed withal in this world, and of the hope you have of happineſs for yourſelves and your friends in the next.

SERMON

SERMON VI.

Internal Marks of Credibility in the New Teſtament.

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2 PETER i. 16.

For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables, when we made known unto you the Power and Coming of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, but were Eye-witneſſes of his Majeſty.

WE are laying before you, the arguments for the truth of our religion; a deſign that needs no apology, and that may juſtly be undertaken without any particular provocation. It would be neceſſary and uſeful though there were none that conteſted the truth of it, or that offered any objections againſt it: for every man ought

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SERM. VI. to have grounds for the religious principles he entertains.

Without therefore any harſh reflections upon others, I ſhall calmly proſecute my argument, and proceed to ſet before you ſome farther evidences of the *credibility of the Goſpel hiſtory*, namely, that *Jeſus Chriſt* dwelt in *Judea*, at the time mentioned in the Goſpels, taught in the name of God, wrought many miracles, and foretold many events which afterwards came to paſs, in confirmation of his miſſion from heaven, ſuffered on the croſs, roſe again, and aſcended into heaven, and that the Apoſtles and others, by powers derived from him, confirmed his doctrine by many wonderful works, and propagated it in many parts of the world.

If the account we have received of theſe things be credible, we have the higheſt reaſon to believe our religion is true, and of divine original.

I propoſed in a former diſcourſe, you may remember, to conſider the marks and characters there are of truth, in the account we

have of theſe things in the books of the New Teſtament. SERM. VI.

I have already made conſiderable progreſs in theſe *internal teſtimonies*, theſe marks and characters of truth, obſervable in the writings of the New Teſtament, which render the account we have received highly probable, and ſuch as may be admitted by reaſonable and inquiſitive perſons. Some of them were the *juſt and natural repreſentation which is here given of all matters related and treated of, the impartiality of the hiſtorie, the plainneſs and ſimplicity of the narration.* I ſhall not now ſtay to rehearſe any other particulars than thoſe now mentioned. I may by and by go them all over again, when I ſum up the argument. For the preſent I proceed to what remains.

8. *Here are many facts and circumſtances ſet down, ſo that if the relation were not true, they might have been eaſily confuted.* This is a good argument of the truth and credibility of any hiſtorie, and is very obſervable in this. For men writing a forged and invented ſtorie, to have taken this method, had been to expoſe themſelves to an eaſie and certain confutation,

SERM. VI. and all the reproaches of falſehood and impoſture, and would have been declined and avoided by all perſons of an ordinary ſagacity.

The ſcenes of the moſt material actions, are not the Deſerts of *Arabia*, or ſome other obſcure and unfrequented places; the time fixed is not ſome diſtant age; nor is the account given obſcure and general.

The facts are related as lately done, ſome of them as tranſacted at *Jeruſalem*, then under ſubjection to the Roman government, and gariſon'd by a band of Roman ſoldiers, others at *Ceſarea*, others in cities of great reſort in *Syria*, and other parts: ſo far is the account from being general and obſcure, that here are notes of time, circumſtances of place, names of perſons, occaſion of action, and many other particulars that might facilitate enquiries, and render a detection no difficult matter, if John i. 28. the relation had not been true. Thus, *theſe things were done in Bethabara, beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing,*

The

The chief ſeat of our Saviour's preaching and miracles was *Gallilee*, and the towns and villages bordering upon the ſea of that name, called likewiſe the ſea of *Tiberias:* his frequent croſſing of that ſea from one ſide to the other; what things happened on one ſide, what on the other, are for the moſt part ſet down very diſtinctly: and for this reaſon, among others, probably, was this place choſen; that by paſſing over to the other ſide of that water, he could avoid that concourſe of people his miracles might otherwiſe have occaſioned, and which was neceſſarie for preventing all umbrage of tumult or diſturbance in the government: and this was a country at no great diſtance from *Jeruſalem:* from whence the high prieſt and phariſees might eaſily ſend officers to ſee what was done, or was related to have been done there, and might enquire into the truth of matters. This country was likewiſe very near to *Ceſarea*, at this time the ſeat of the Roman proconſul, and inhabited by great numbers of Jews, as well as Greeks and Syrians: *And they came over unto the other ſide of the ſea into the country of the Gadarenes; and when he was come out of the ſhip, immediately there met him* Mark v. 1, 2.

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SERM. VI. *out of the tombs, a man with an unclean ſpirit.* Him, our Saviour delivered; after which, upon our Saviour's permiſſion, the evil ſpirits that came out of the man, entered into ſwine feeding there, which ran violently into the ſea:

ver. 21. *and when Jeſus was paſſed over again by ſhip unto the other ſide,* he cured the daughter of one of the rulers of the ſynagogue, *Jairus* by name.

There are accounts of miracles wrought, in which vaſt numbers were concerned, which muſt render enquiries eaſy. Five thouſand men, beſides women and children, were fed with five loaves and two fiſhes. This was done in a deſart place, belonging to the city *Bethſaida.*

Luke ix. 10, 11.

Our Saviour is ſaid to have been crucified at *Jeruſalem,* at the time of the paſſover.

The gift of tongues is ſaid to have been beſtowed likewiſe at *Jeruſalem,* at *Pentecoſt*; and at theſe two feaſts, it is well-known, there uſed to be at that time a reſort of vaſt numbers of people, Jews and proſelites, to *Jeruſalem*;

ſalem; not only from all parts of *Judea*, but also from many other countries. SERM. VI.

The firſt inſtance of the invitation of a Heathen into the religion of *Chriſt*, was *Cornelius*, a Roman, an officer at *Ceſarea*, a conſiderable perſon in a noted city. The mention of ſuch facts as theſe, in this manner, if not true, muſt have laid them open to an eaſie confutation, and all the reproaches of impoſture. Acts x.

But there are other particulars related, which had a tendency to raiſe reſentment in perſons of figure and power, and, if falſe, muſt ſome of them have expoſed them to puniſhment, without any grounds for pity or juſtification from any. The account given of the perſecution of our Saviour, by the high prieſts and phariſees, is of this nature; and his condemnation by *Pilate*, governor of *Judea*: of this kind is the account given of the beheading of *John* the Baptiſt, and the occaſion of it. Nor would it have been ſafe to have told ſuch a ſtorie as is done, of St. *Paul*'s being ſeized in the temple by a great number of Jews, and carried thence to be ſtoned by them; of his being taken out of their hands by *Lyſias* the chief Mat. xiv. Acts xxi.

SERM. VI. chief captain; of the Jews that devoted themſelves afterwards, under a curſe, to kill *Paul*; of *Lyſias* ſending him afterwards under a
Acts xxii. guard to *Felix*, the governor of *Ceſarea*; of *Paul*'s preaching before *Felix* and *Druſella*; and that *Felix* trembled when *Paul* reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come, and that he hoped to have had money given him of *Paul*, that he might
Acts xxiv. 25, 26. looſe him; and that *Felix* delivered over *Paul* to *Portius Feſtus*, his ſucceſſor, willing to do the Jews a favour; nor would they have related an appearance of *Paul* before king *Agrippa* and *Bernice*, who came to *Ceſarea* to ſalute *Feſtus*; nor the apology he made for
Acts xxv. 13. himſelf before them. Such facts as theſe, would never have been mentioned in this manner, if not true. This then is another argument of the credibility of this hiſtorie.

9. Another internal teſtimony of the truth of this hiſtorie is, *the marks of honeſty and integrity of the perſons engaged in the firſt publiſhing the Goſpel, and who were the witneſſes of the main facts here related, which appear in the writings of the New Teſtament.* Theſe we

may learn by nicely obſerving their conduct in the proſecution of this deſign. SERM. VI.

There is indeed another way of making out the honeſty of theſe perſons: for the proving of that, and that the Goſpel was no invention, or cunningly deviſed fable, as the Apoſtle's expreſſion is in the text, but what they were fully perſuaded of in their own minds, we might argue in this manner.

Was it likely, that a few perſons of an obſcure birth in *Judea*, ſupported by no conſiderable alliances, ſhould entertain a thought of ſubverting the religious worſhip and cuſtoms of their own country, and of the reſt of the world, unleſs they were fully perſuaded they had ſpecial illuminations, and extraordinary aſſiſtance from God; and ſhould be ſupported by him with a power of working ſuch miracles as this hiſtorie relates they performed? Were they ignorant of the bigotry and ſtiffneſs of their own countrymen, or of the circumſtances of other people in the world, whoſe religions were ſupported by antiquity, great unanimity, by the power of the nations in which they obtained, by the influence and

arms

SERM. VI. arms of the Roman empire, then ſpread over almoſt all the known parts of the world; all which religions were very inviting and engaging, by the vaſt indulgence they gave to the corrupt inclinations of men? Could they imagine, they ſhould be able by mere artifice, or bare force of argument, to propagate a religion entirely new, that would lay a diſgrace on the rites and ceremonies inſtituted by *Moſes*, as mean and inſignificant, that paid no honour to their temple, or their ſacrifices, or their ſolemn feaſts, and denied altogether the traditions of the elders, for which the Jews had ſo high a veneration; in a word, that retained ſcarce any part or principle of that religion, beſides the one article of the one God, that made the heavens and the earth; and that would aſſert the Gods of all other countreys and people were devils, or ſenſeleſs idols, and repreſent their religious principles and practices as abſolutely abſurd and abominable?

Was it likely, that any perſons ſhould, for the ſake of a forgery, run the hazard of all thoſe ſufferings and inconveniences they could not but expect in the proſecution of ſuch a deſign? What could they expect but diſgrace and contempt

contempt at leaſt, to be deemed madmen at beſt, that would propagate notions contrary to all the reſt of mankind, perhaps to be treated as ſeditious and turbulent, men that had bad deſigns, contrary to the common belief of the civil conſtitutions of the world? no advantage poſſible to be obtained without great fatigue and many dangers: they muſt encounter the paſſions as well as the ſentiments of mankind. Would any men undergo this for the ſake of a mere invention? What is there ſo taking in being the head of a party? eſpecially, could it be likely, that men of a low education, as moſt of theſe perſons were, ſhould be ſeized with this ſort of ambition, and enter on a deſign incumbered with ſo many difficulties? Would they not rather chooſe peace and quietneſs at home, and a competence in the callings they were bred up in? As for *Paul* in particular, what temptation of gain or honour could he have in this undertaking; was he not bred up in the moſt honourable and flouriſhing ſect in his own nation, under a maſter of conſiderable reputation, and muſt he not here have the faireſt view of all that could flatter his pride and ambition, if theſe were the principles that governed him? SERM. VI.

But

SERM. VI. But in anſwer to all this, it may be ſaid, this does not ſeem very likely. However, it is not impoſſible, and can never be proved, that no men may form projects, which have not at firſt appearance any proſpect of ſucceſs; ſome men are fond of their own ſchemes, and have an high opinion of their own abilities; imagine they can ſurmount very great difficulties, and by addreſs and artifice, break through a great deal of oppoſition. Some have engaged in great and hazardous deſigns, and have ſucceeded beyond what the moſt could have imagined; and the few inſtances there have been of this kind, may give encouragement to others of a bold and preſumptuous imagination.

As to the mean occupations of moſt of the twelve, ſome ſuch perſons have had high ſpirits, and have been carried by their ambition into vaſt deſigns: as for the pains they muſt take, the fatigues they muſt undergo, many perſons will forgoe outward eaſe, and ſenſual pleaſure, and be at a great deal of pains to carry a point they have once propoſed to themſelves. As for the ſufferings and inconveniencies they run the hazard of, all men

don't

don't judge alike of theſe things: the timorous and the daring are very differently affected by them. Some imagine difficulties in every thing; others reckon every thing they have a mind to, eaſie to accompliſh. Some men's ſpirits are ſharpened by the appearance of difficulties, and they are even fond of ſuch undertakings. As to *Paul*'s proſpects of honour and advancement in his own nation and his own ſect, it might be ſo as has been repreſented; but perhaps he had met with ſome check, and his pretenſions were not gratified, and in a diſguſt he might reſolve revenge, and enter into a deſign that ſhould ruin the ſect that had ſhewn him unkindneſs. So that a great deal may be ſaid on both ſides, in this general ſpeculation, on the paſſions, intereſts, views, and inclinations of men. SERM. VI.

I cannot ſay we need decline this way of arguing, as if we had no advantage in it: for certainly, conſidering the ſtate of the world at that time, the circumſtances of Jews and Gentils, the Apoſtles muſt have had a very unaccountable turn of mind, and have been very different from the reſt of their ſpecies, if by their own ſkill and contrivance they imagined

SERM. VI. gined they could bring any great number of perſons over to their opinions, which were ſingular, and oppoſite to all others; and if they had not entertained hopes of making a conſiderable number of proſelytes, they could not act upon ſecular views and conſiderations. However, at preſent I do not inſiſt upon this; and the courſe of my argument leads me to the other method of ſurveying and examining their conduct, to ſee what marks they give of deſign, what of honeſty and integrity. This ſeems to be more deciſive than the other way. We have, in the writings of the New Teſtament, ſufficient materials to go upon in this enquiry.

That they did not ſet out in this undertaking with ſecular views, and were not actuated by them in the proſecution of it, appears in all the parts of their conduct; they did not aim at pleaſure and eaſe, at wealth or honour.

That they did not ſeek eaſe and bodily pleaſure, appears from the fatigues they underwent, the journeys they took; and that impriſonment, ſtripes, and ſcourging, did not diſcourage them in proſecuting their deſign.

But

But this is ſo evident that it need not be inſiſted on. SERM. VI.

And if men propoſe the aggrandizing themſelves by heaping up wealth, or by raiſing to themſelves authority and power, they will often forgoe and neglect bodily pleaſure: but neither did they ſeek wealth, for they made no profit of the religious inſtructions they gave men, nor of the powers they claimed and put in practice, of healing diſtempers, and removing other bodily inconveniencies men laboured under. They freely imployed this power on the poor and neceſſitous, ſuch as were able to make no requitals for it; though they were far from being poſſeſſed of any ſuperfluous riches. *Peter* and *John*, of meer benevolence healed the lame man that was daily laid at the gate of the temple to aſk alms of them who entered into it: and *Peter* ſaid unto him, *Silver and gold have I none; but ſuch as I have give I thee: In the name of Jeſus of Nazareth riſe up and walk.* Men that are rich will give any part of their ſubſtance to recover their health, and preſerve life, when under painful and dangerous illneſſes; and any advantages might be made of this power, ſup- Acts iii. 6.

SERM. VI.

poſing it poſſible to be lodged in men of a ſordid ſpirit, or a worldly mind; eſpecially if we conſider that the Apoſtles are repreſented, not only as poſſeſſed of the power of healing themſelves, but likewiſe of a capacity of beſtowing gifts of the Holy Ghoſt on others. ſelfiſh and covetous perſons would have purchaſed ſuch a gift at any rate: but the Apoſtles deteſted ſuch a thing as making profits of this part of their power. They met with temptations of this kind, but rejected them with the utmoſt abhorrence and indignation. When the Goſpel had been received by ſome at *Samaria*, and the Apoſtles had conferred ſome gifts on ſome of the converts; *when Simon ſaw that through laying on of the Apoſtles hands the Holy Ghoſt was given, he offered them money, ſaying, Give me alſo this power, that on whomſoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghoſt; but Peter ſaid unto him, Thy money periſh with thee, becauſe thou haſt neither part nor lot in this matter.*

Acts viii. 18—21.

In divers places where *Paul* ſpent a conſiderable time in ſowing the ſeed of religious principles, in convincing and teaching, he refuſed all gratuities, though he did, it is true, accept

accept of ſome ſupply from others. *When I was preſent with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me, the brethren which came from Macedonia ſupplied; and in all things, I have kept myſelf from being burdenſome unto you:* but all this appears, from the expreſſion made uſe of, to have been only a ſupply for the preſent, and what could not laſt long. And it is plain from what St. *Luke* relates, that during part of his ſtay at *Corinth*, he worked with his own hands for the gaining what was neceſſary for the ſupport of life: *After theſe things, Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth, and found a certain Jew named Aquila, with his wife Preſcilla; and becauſe he was of the ſame craft, he abode with them, and wrought, (for by their occupation they were tent-makers).* At *Theſſalonica* likewiſe this was the caſe: for he tells the *Theſſalonians: You remember, brethren, our labour and travel: for labouring night and day, becauſe we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the Goſpel of God.* Nor did he ſuffer others to make any conſiderable advantages. *Did I make a gain of you, by any of thoſe whom I ſent unto you? I deſired Titus, and with him I ſent a brother: did Titus*

SERM. VI.

2 Cor. xi. 9.

Acts xviii. 1.

1 Epiſtle ii. 9.

2 Cor. xii. 17, 18.

SERM. VI. *make a gain of you? walked we not in the ſame ſteps?*

Yea, the Apoſtle profeſſed himſelf a loſer on the account of this religion, which, whether true or not, might have been known.

Phil. iii. 8. *Yea doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord, for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt.*

It is evident they did not ſeek honour to themſelves, the common charge againſt innovators, the great propenſity, as it is ſuppoſed, of all who affect to be heads of a party. From thoſe that continued their old affection for Judaiſm or Heatheniſm, they could expect nothing but contempt or averſion—to be thought inconſiderate, miſtaken and deluded wretches, or elſe proud and ſelf-opinionated, perhaps deſigning and wicked. As for them that came over to them entirely, or conceived favour for their doctrine, it is plain they ſought not honour from them; for they refuſed all undue reſpects when offered them. We have an in-

Acts xiv. ſtance of this at *Lyſtra*. *Paul* and *Barnabas* cured

cured a man lame from his birth. When the people ſaw this, *they lift up their voices, ſaying, the Gods are come down to us in the likeneſs of men.* The prieſt of *Jupiter* had prepared oxen and garlands, and would have done ſacrifice with the people. It was even dangerous to oppoſe ſuch an attempt of gratitude and reſpect. Yet the Apoſtles with the greateſt eagerneſs put by theſe offers, tho' they could not do it but in a way that muſt lay a diſgrace upon the rites this people were devoted to; *they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, Sirs, Why do ye theſe things? we preach unto you that ye turn from theſe vanities, unto the living God. And with theſe ſayings, ſcarce reſtrained they the people, that they had not done ſacrifice unto them.* SERM. VI.

They wrought no miracles in their own name: when they beſtowed any extraordinary kindneſs upon any perſon, they did it in the name of *Jeſus Chriſt*. And when any were ready to run into a miſtake, and aſcribe to them what did not belong to them, they were careful to rectify ſuch apprehenſions. When the people at *Jeruſalem* flocked together about

SERM. VI. *Peter* and *John*, upon the cure of the lame man at the gate of the temple, *greatly wondering*; *when Peter ſaw it*, he ſaid to them, *Why marvel ye at this? or why look ye ſo earneſtly upon us; as tho', by our own power, or holineſs, we had made this man to walk? The God of our fathers hath glorified his Son Jeſus:* the uſe they make of it is, to magnify the goodneſs of God, and the power of *Chriſt*, and to bring them to true repentance, that they may all ſhare in the favour of God: *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your ſins may be blotted out, when the times of refreſhing ſhall come from the preſence of the Lord.* When *Peter* was entering in to *Cornelius*, and he met him, and fell down at his feet and worſhipped him, *Peter took him up, ſaying, ſtand up; I myſelf alſo am a man.* They diſclaimed likewiſe all undue reſpects among thoſe that had acknowledged their commiſſion, and received their doctrine. They deteſted all contentions about their own perſons, owned their meanneſs, and referred all to the glorie of God. *Now this I ſay, that every one of you ſaith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Chriſt. Is Chriſt divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptiſed in the name of Paul?*

Acts iii. 19.

Acts x. 25, 26.

1 Cor. i. 12, 13.

They

They owned their own meanneſs; that God had *choſen the fooliſh things of the world, and weak things, and baſe things of the world*; that he that glorieth might *glory in the Lord.* Again, *I was with you in weakneſs and in fear, and my ſpeech was not with inticing words of man's wiſdom, but in demonſtration of the Spirit, and of power, that your faith ſhould not ſtand in the wiſdom of men, but in the power of God. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered: but God gave the encreaſe. So then, neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth: but God that giveth the increaſe. Theſe things have I in a figure transferred to myſelf, and to Apollos, for your ſakes; that you might learn in us, not to think of men above that which is written. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for we preach not ourſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord; and ourſelves your ſervants for Jeſus ſake.* SERM. VI. —ver. 27—31. —chap. ii. 1. —chap. iii. 5, 6, 7. —chap iv 6. 2 Cor. i. 24. —chap. iv 5.

I might refer you to the appeals they have made themſelves upon ſome occaſions in behalf of their integrity: ſome of which at leaſt

SERM. VI. are ſuch as would not have been made, had they not been fully perſuaded of their own ſincerity, and that the perſons to whom they made them, could give no proofs to the contrary, nay, muſt have ſuch evidences of it before them as were undeniable. *For our rejoicing is this, the teſtimony of our conſcience, that in ſimplicity and godly ſincerity, not with fleſhly wiſdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our converſation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward. But even after that we had ſuffered before, and were ſhamefully entreated at Philippi; we were bold in our God to ſpeak unto you the Goſpel of Chriſt. Neither at any time uſed we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetouſneſs, God is witneſs. Neither of men ſought we glory, nor of you, nor yet of others. Ye are witneſſes, and God alſo, how holily and unblameably we behaved ourſelves among you that believe.* A greater regard may be had to theſe appeals, becauſe there were in moſt of the churches different parties, ſome Judaizing Chriſtians and their teachers; and if there could have been any exceptions againſt them, it would have been in vain to make them,

2 Cor. i. 12

1 Theſſ. ii. 2.

—ver. 5.

—ver. 10.

But

But there are ſome other appeals of the A- SERM. VI.
poſtle *Paul*, which we may certainly lay a great ſtreſs upon, conſidering the occaſion of them, the perſons to whom, and the places in which they were made, and which muſt abſolutely vindicate him in particular from all ſuſpicion of baſeneſs, and from ſelfiſh and worldly views in this deſign of ſpreading the Goſpel. In Acts xx. 18, 19. is his parting ſpeech to the elders at *Epheſus*: *Ye know from the time that I came into Aſia*. *i. e.* that part of *Aſia* which was then properly called by that name; *after what manner I have been with you at all ſeaſons, ſerving the Lord with all humility of mind, and with many fears and temptations.—I have co-* —ver. 33, *veted no man's ſilver, or gold, or apparel: Yea, you* 34. *yourſelves know that theſe hands have miniſtered unto my neceſſities, and to them that were with me.* In Acts xxi, xxii. is an account of the ſeizing of *Paul*, by a multitude of Jews, in the temple at *Jeruſalem*; of his being taken out of their hands by the chief captain, who came with a band of ſoldiers, and bound him with chains: and when *Paul* was going up into the caſtle, followed by a great croud, and had obtained leave to ſpeak to the people, he ſpoke to them in the Hebrew tongue; *Men, brethren,*

SERM. VI. *brethren, and fathers,—I am verily a man which am a Jew of Tarſus: yet brought up in this city at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day; and I perſecuted this way unto the death;—as alſo the high prieſt doth bear me witneſs, and all the eſtate of the elders, from whom alſo I received letters, and went unto Damaſcus to bring them which were there bound unto Jeruſalem to be puniſhed.* Then he proceeds to relate the extraordinary appearance he ſaw in the way, which was the means of his converſion. Now is it conceiveable, that under ſuch circumſtances, when he was in the hands of the chief captain, the people of *Jeruſalem* incenſed and clamourous againſt him, he ſhould give this account of himſelf, of the name of the perſon by whom he was educated in that
Acts v. 34. city, and who was alſo living at that very time; appeal to the high prieſt himſelf, and the body of the elders, and tell them what was the real cauſe of his converſion; if in all this there had been any falſehood, and if there had been any ill conduct in the former part of his life, for which he had been thrown off by his party, or, if he had met with diſappointment in any

pretenſions which might be matter of laſting diſguſt, had it not been eaſie to convict him? and would not a falſhood delivered by him at this time, have been much to his diſadvantage? But nothing of this appears, there was no falſehood in it; they heard him patiently, till in the courſe of his ſpeech, he comes to mention a deſign of God, to ſend him from hence to the Gentils. *They gave him audience to theſe words:* but the bare mention of any favour of God to the Gentils, threw them into a rage that excluded all thought and conſideration; then they cryed out, *Away with ſuch a fellow from the earth, for it is not fit that he ſhould live.* This was the account he gave of himſelf upon many occaſions, we find it in his ſpeech to *Agrippa: My manner of life from my youth, which was at the firſt among my own nation at Jeruſalem, know all the Jews, which knew me from the beginning (if they would teſtify) that after the moſt ſtraiteſt ſect of our religion I lived a Phariſee.* See Acts xxiii. 1. *Phill.* iii. 4. 5. and *Gal.* i. 13, 14. Theſe are appeals would not have been made, if they could have been refuted.

SERM. VI.

Acts xxvi. 4, 5.

It

SERM. VI. It is a ſtrong proof of their integrity, and that they had no ſelfiſh deſigns in ſpreading a new ſet of religious principles, that they did not endeavour to accommodate the principles they delivered as from God, to the corrupt taſte of Jews or Gentils. It was not a religion made up partly of the one, and partly of the other; modelled, and contrived, and adjuſted ſo as to pleaſe all parties. The Jews were implacably incenſed, yet they made no compoſition with them in favour of their temple, their ſacrifices, or their prieſthood. When the Jewiſh converts had a zeal for ſome part of the Moſaic law, and they were ſomewhat indulged as to themſelves, yet they could never lay unneceſſarie burdens upon the Gentils, or oblige them to ſubmit to any of the diſtinguiſhing rites of that inſtitution. This was the determination of the Apoſtles and Elders in a full aſſembly at *Jeruſalem*. *Paul* every where declares againſt the neceſſitie of circumciſion: and *Peter* had given his judgment clearly on the ſame ſide, tho' in a particular inſtance he was guilty in his practice of an improper compliance. As for the Gentils, there was no favour ſhewn to any of their gods, or their rites: no indulgence to apply to them

as

as objects of worſhip, or as mediators and in- SERM. VI.
terceſſors: but they declared, notwithſtanding the vaſt number of gods which were the object of general devotion, that there was but one God, and one mediator between God and man: no indulgence to any vicious diſorders, no relaxations of the ſtrictneſs of their rules of life, in behalf of the moſt general cuſtoms, or the ſtrongeſt inclinations: the preaching of the croſs proved a ſcandal (tho' unjuſtly, and without reaſon) to many, was to the Jews a ſtumbling block, and to the Greeks fooliſhneſs; yet ſtill they taught *Chriſt* crucified, as the wiſdom of God, and the power of God. They preached repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord *Jeſus Chriſt*, to Jews and Gentils; exhorted the one not to depend upon their privileges, and the others to turn from their vanities, to the living and true God.

The freedom they uſed towards thoſe who were converted to Chriſtianity, is another argument of their ſincerity. They connived at no diſorders among them; nor did they uſe flattering words, but charged them to *walk worthy of* the Lord, *who had called them into his kingdom and glory*. Blaming even their backwardneſs

2 Cor. xii, 20, 21.

1 Theſſ. ii. 11, 12.

SERM. VI. 1 Cor. iii. backwardneſs and ſlow progreſs in Chriſtian knowledge and virtues. *And I, brethren, could not ſpeak unto you as unto ſpiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Chriſt: I have fed you with milk, and not with meat —for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envyings, and ſtrife, and diviſions; are ye not carnal, and walk as men. For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the firſt principles of the oracles of God, and are become ſuch as have need of milk, and not of ſtrong meat.* Would any man have talked at this rate, ſpoke in this manner, who was ambitious to be at the head of a numerous party, when the perſons they treat thus, muſt be under very ſtrong temptations from this world, and perhaps ſome likewiſe from their own inclinations, to return to the more ſplendid, and yet more general religions of Judaiſm, or Gentiliſm, which they had lately forſaken.

Laſtly. As to this point, it is a proof they were not influenced by worldly views in this deſign, ſince they perſiſted in it notwithſtanding the very fierce oppoſition they met with from the Jews, and the ſcorn and contempt that

that was ſhewn them by the generality of Hea- SERM. VI.
thens: and when in the churches they planted, and among thoſe who had given the moſt favourable reception to them, there were many who received their principles but in part, and did not ſubmit to all their rules of life in their full force; when ſome, who had accompanied them in this work, forſook them, loving this preſent world, others gave way to ſeducers, and denied them that little authority they claimed, which they deſired them to ſhow no other mark of, than by adhering to the principles they had confirmed among them by undeniable evidence; certainly they were animated by other, by higher conſiderations, than worldly motives and inducements; for of theſe, they met with none; and they muſt have been quite diſcouraged and (for ever) have abandoned their deſign, if they had not looked more *at the things which are not ſeen, which are eternal, than at the things which are ſeen, which are temporal.*

Theſe are as ſtrong proofs of men's integrity as we can deſire, as convincing as can be given.

10. We may reckon it an argument of the credibility of this account, *that the writers of it,*

SERM. VI. *it, and the perſons engaged in the firſt publiſhing the Goſpel, and who were the witneſſes of the main facts upon which the whole depends, do appear to be free from Enthuſiaſm:* that is, they did not believe becauſe they believed, nor act by impulſe and inclination; but they were influenced in their belief and conduct, by reaſon and evidence, not by a ſtrong imagination: their own faith was founded upon evidence and

1 John i. 1. reaſon. *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have ſeen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; this declare we unto you.* And what they profeſſed to others, they proved by reaſon and argument. That they were not of an enthuſiaſtic ſpirit, appears in the accounts given of the public preaching of our Saviour. He referred the Jews to the ſcriptures they read daily, and whoſe authority they owned: he appealed to

John x. 37 his works. *If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not.* I might refer you as a proof of this character, to ſuch exhortations as theſe.

1 Theſſ. v. 21. *Prove all things, hold faſt that which is good.*

1 John iv. 1. *Believe not every ſpirit, but try the ſpirits, whether they be of God.*

1 Cor. x. 15. *Judge ye what I ſay.* Their offering

offering all things to a fair trial and examination. SERM. VI.

The full conviction of the Apoſtles themſelves, of the divine character of our Saviour, ſeems to be owing to his reſurrection from the dead, and the pouring out of the Holy Ghoſt upon themſelves. And ſtronger evidences could not be given of a commiſſion from heaven.

The ſpeeches, we have preſerved in the Acts, and the epiſtles they wrote, are full of reaſons and arguments: ſome points are ſupported by a variety of proofs: you will find a ſtrain of excellent reaſoning in the ſpeeches of *Peter*, the firſt publiſher of the Goſpel, after our Lord's aſcenſion: when, upon the Apoſtles making uſe of a vaſt variety of languages, in the hearing of the inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, and of the ſtrangers that were come thither from all parts at the feaſt of *Pentecoſt*, ſome wondered, *others ſaid, theſe men are full of new wine: but Peter ſtanding up, ſaid*, among other things, *theſe are not drunken, as ye ſuppoſe, ſeeing it is but the third hour of the day*; or nine in the morning, the time of prayer, to Acts ii. 13. —ver. 15.

SERM. VI. which they generally came faſting. *Ye men of Iſrael, hear theſe words; Jeſus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you, by miracles, and wonders, and ſigns, which God did by him* —ver. 22. *in the midſt of you, as ye yourſelves alſo know. This Jeſus hath God raiſed up, whereof we all are witneſſes: therefore being by the right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father* —ver. 32, 33. *the promiſe of the Holy Ghoſt, he hath ſhed forth this, which ye now ſee and hear.* Are theſe arguments that can be gainſayed? He reminds them of the miracles *Chriſt* had wrought among them; declares they were witneſſes of his reſurrection, having ſeen and converſed with him ſince his crucifixion and burial; and as a proof of his exaltation by God, appeals to them as witneſſes to what they ſaw and heard, as to the change wrought in themſelves, and the diſcourſes they had heard from them in tongues they had not ſtudied or learned.

See Acts iii. from 2. to the end. iv. 19—29, 31. *Peter*'s ſpeech to *Cornelius* is of the ſame kind. *That word, you know, which was publiſhed throughout all Judea: —How God anointed Jeſus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghoſt, and with power, who went about doing* Acts x. 37. —42.

good, and healing all that were oppreſſed of the devil: for God was with him; and we are witneſſes of all things which he did in the land of the Jews, and in Jeruſalem; whom they ſlew and hanged on a tree. Him God raiſed up the third day, and ſhewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witneſſes,—even to us, who did eat and drink with him after he roſe from the dead; and he commanded us to preach unto the people. He refers them to facts, wrought openly, and lately done in all parts of *Judea:* and as to our Saviour's reſurrection, the Apoſtles, and others, who had ſeen him, converſed with him, and to whoſe examination of him, he had offered himſelf, they were certainly competent judges, and ſufficient witneſſes of ſuch a fact. SERM. VI.

And I think no one will deny the ſpeech of *Peter*, in Acts xi. to be full of ſtrong and cogent arguments: when he was come back to *Jeruſalem* from *Cornelius*, they who were of the circumciſion, contended with him, ſaying, *Thou wenteſt in to men uncircumciſed, and didſt eat with them*; upon which he related the whole affair to them, gave them an account of the reaſons he had for going to *Cornelius*, and to baptize him, and at laſt ſhews that he

SERM. VI. had not acted without good grounds in what he had done. *As I began to ſpeak, the Holy Ghoſt fell upon them, as on us at the beginning.—For-aſmuch then as God gave unto them the like gifts that he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt; what was I that I could withſtand God? When they heard theſe things, they held their peace, and glorified God, ſaying, Then hath God alſo to the Gentils granted repentance unto life.* A moſt juſt concluſion certainly from ſuch premiſes. In Acts xv. is the ſame argument or reaſoning in the aſſembly at *Jeruſalem.*

The ſpeech of *Paul* at *Athens*, is likewiſe a a piece of maſterly reaſoning, wherein he proves the perfections of the divine Being, from things viſible in the frame of the world; from the powers we ourſelves are endowed with, and the benefits men daily receive from him; and proceeds at length to the revelation, made to the world by *Chriſt*; and exhorts them to repentance, from the conſideration of that righteous judgment which ſhould paſs upon men by *Chriſt*, of which God had given aſſurance, in that he had raiſed him from the dead.

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And he that conſiders the other ſpeeches of *Paul*, may obſerve they are free from all enthuſiaſm, ſuited to the character of the perſons he ſpoke to, and the principles they admitted, before *he reaſoned of righteouſneſs, temperance, and a judgment to come.* *Feſtus* indeed told him, upon his finiſhing his apology made before king *Agrippa*; *Paul, thou art beſide thyſelf: much learning doth make thee mad.* But he that conſiders the ſpeech itſelf, and the reply he made to *Feſtus*, muſt be ſenſible what *Feſtus* had ſaid aroſe from prejudice, or great anacquaintedneſs with ſome of the matters *Paul* had treated of. He therefore juſtly replied to him, *I am not mad, moſt noble Feſtus, but ſpeak forth the words of truth and ſoberneſs*; and appeals to king *Agrippa*, who might be ſuppoſed better acquainted with theſe matters than *Feſtus*: *For the king knows of theſe things, before whom I ſpeak*; *for I am perſuaded that none of theſe things are hidden from him: for this thing was not done in a corner.*

Acts xxiv. 25.

Acts xxvi. 24.

There are indeed ſome relations of trances and viſions, which may be thought to contradict this repreſentation of the Apoſtles characters. I will conſider a few of them, which I

SERM. VI. do not ſelect from the reſt, as moſt capable of ſolution; for as far as I can judge, they are as exceptionable as any that can be inſtanced in.

Acts x. May not the account given of *Peter*'s trance and viſion, give juſt ſuſpicion of his being liable to the impreſſions of a ſtrong imagination, and to be influenced by them in his conduct; that *Peter* went up to pray, fell into a trance, ſaw heaven opened, and *a certain veſſel deſcending to him, wherein were all manner of four-footed beaſts, creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Riſe, Peter, kill and eat: but Peter ſaid, Not ſo, Lord; for I have not eaten any thing common or unclean. And the voice ſaid unto him, What God hath cleanſed, that call not thou common.* A full reply, I think, may be given to this. Perhaps it is hardly worth obſerving, that this was not in the night time, when the darkneſs of the ſeaſon, the diſpoſition of mens bodies, and ſome common prejudices, render men more ſuſceptible of conceits, and impreſſions, or more liable to be deluded by cunning impoſtors; for it happened at the ſixth hour of the day, *i. e.* at noon. He could not well be miſtaken, for the viſion and the voice was repeated thrice: and when he was doubting what this viſion

viſion ſhould mean, perſons enquired for him, acquainted him they came from *Cornelius*, who had been admoniſhed by an angel to ſend for him: when he came thither, he found him in a diſpoſition to receive farther information in matters of religion, and gifts and bleſſings were beſtowed in a viſible manner upon them that attended to him. Such a ſeries of events correſponding to his viſion, might well aſſure him of the reality of his viſion, and the meaning of it: and may fully vindicate the perſon that related this account, from all credulity. It is an additional confirmation of the truth and reality of this whole account, that the intent of the viſion, and the uſe made of it, was by no means ſuitable to any preconceived notions we can ſuppoſe to have been in *Peter*'s mind; and therefore, nothing but full evidence could incline him to admit the truth of a viſion and voice, that ſent him to perſons uncircumciſed. SERM. VI.

The hiſtory of St. *Paul*'s converſion is another paſſage that may ſeem to favour of enthuſiaſm. But if we carefully examine all the parts and circumſtances of it, I believe we ſhall find it void of all tokens, either of forgery

SERM. VI. or deluſion; that it could not be a forgery or invention, is evident from the circumſtances ſet forth. It is ſaid to have happened when in company of thoſe that attended him from the high prieſt and elders at *Jeruſalem*, to put in execution orders for ſeizing perſons at *Damaſcus*, that had embraced Chriſtianity; it was in the day-time, and it happened upon the road in an open place. That all this was matter of fact, appears in that he boldly told this ſtory as the ground of his converſion, without any apprehenſions of confutation: and that the perſons who were with him were ſo ſurpriſed at the light, as to fall to the ground, and to be ſpeechleſs for a time: that blindneſs enſued, and continued upon him for three days; this muſt be known to them that laid their hands on him at *Damaſcus*. And that he was careful, not to declare any thing more than the truth, appears in that he ſays, They, who were with him, ſaw no man: he does not appeal to them for the truth of any thing more than was before them. The extraordinary light, and a voice, they were witneſs of: but the appearance of *Chriſt* to him, and the words he ſpoke to him, and his blindneſs afterwards, rely upon his own teſtimony; and, that

that he was not then himſelf deluded and deceived, appears in that this happened at mid-day; the light was ſo great as to be above the brightneſs of the ſun. A blindneſs continued three days: his cure was wrought by *Ananias* putting his hand upon him, and declaring that *Jeſus*, who had appeared to him in the way, had ſent him to reſtore his ſight; whereupon there fell from his eyes as it had been ſcales, and he ſaw. Such an account as this, of an apparition that happened to *Paul*, not when alone, but in company, and that not in the company of thoſe who were friends, and of the ſame way with him, may well be related by St. *Luke* without credulity. SERM. VI.

There is one paſſage, which, perhaps, is the hardeſt of all to be accounted for: what *Paul* has ſaid, of his being taken up into paradiſe, or the third heaven; where he heard unſpeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter. However, I think he will be acquitted here, if we conſider the occaſion of mentioning them: namely, the ſubtle methods of deſigning perſons to draw off the *Corinthians*, whom he had taken a great deal of pains with, from the ſimplicity of the Goſpel; 2 Cor. xii.

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pel; their attempt to leſſen him unreaſonably, on account of ſome diſadvantages in his perſon, and his manner of ſpeaking; and poſſibly, becauſe he had not perſonally converſed with *Chriſt*, as *Peter*, and the other Apoſtles. For this reaſon, he relates this extraordinary favour he had had from God, which he might certainly do if a truth, if he apprehended it might be of uſe to retain the *Corinthians* in the profeſſion of the purity of the Goſpel, tho' he does not make it the ſole ground of their belief of it, for he refers them in the 12th verſe of this chapter, as well as in other places, to the miracles he had wrought. *Truly the ſigns of an Apoſtle were wrought among you, in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds.* Our apology for this paſſage, and the Apoſtle, would not be compleat, if we omitted the manner in which he relates it. He appears to be in pain, and can hardly perſuade himſelf to mention it, as directly relating to himſelf. *I knew a man in Chriſt, above fourteen years ago.* It was not mentioned till a long while after it had happened. He tells us the danger he was in honeſtly of ſome pride and vanity: and we have reaſon to credit what he has here declared, in that he uſes ſo much caution,

not

not to ſay any thing poſitively, but what he was certain of; being in doubt whether this was with his ſpirit, or his whole man: *whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth.* Words twice uſed on this account. SERM. VI.

And in behalf of theſe paſſages, we may offer this general obſervation; that when men came with a ſet of religious principles, that were beyond all others for their real excellency, their reaſonableneſs, their purity, their tendency to regulate and improve the minds and lives of men, and produced before men's eyes openly works of an extraordinary nature; if they ſhould, upon ſome particular occaſion, relate an account of a viſion, or ſome uncommon appearance, and what was ſaid unto them therein, they would deſerve credit if they were perſons of an unblameable behaviour, if the principles they taught were pure and holy, and their reaſoning upon all occaſions juſt and good, and they wrought miracles in atteſtation of their miſſion; this may ſecure their credit, and vindicate them from the charge of enthuſiaſm in ſuch particulars as we have now been conſidering, and that they are not

SERM. VI. not under the power of an ungoverned imagination. But all this will be no vindication, or recommendation of others, who pretend to viſions and appearances in behalf of trifles, and who give no ſenſible proofs of a correſpondence between heaven and earth, and who, in their ordinary behaviour, ſhew much greater ſtrength of phanſie and imagination, than of reaſon and judgment.

Theſe two laſt particulars may be joined together. We ſuppoſe thoſe matters of fact to be well atteſted, which we receive from perſons of honeſt hearts, and ſound underſtandings.

11. *That the Apoſtles wrought miracles, and conferred extraordinary gifts upon many others, is apparent from their epiſtles, wrote and directed to thoſe who had ſeen theſe works, and ſhared in theſe benefits.* Theſe epiſtles of *Paul*, and the other epiſtles in the New Teſtament, have all the tokens of genuine letters: all except one or two have the name of the perſons that wrote them. Here is the name of the perſon or church, and place to which they were ſent; ſalutations of particular perſons ſent to others by name. Here are references to the particular occaſion

occaſion of writing them. The 2d epiſtle to the Corinthians has reſpect to the ſucceſs and acceptance of a former letter ſent to them: in ſome, queſtions are anſwered, that are ſuppoſed to have been ſent to the writer for ſolution; ſo that there can be no doubt of their having been really ſent to the churches and perſons they are directed to. I inſiſt only on the marks and characters in theſe epiſtles themſelves, that may aſſure us they are genuine; for I am upon internal teſtimonies only. Now, in theſe epiſtles, the writers take notice of the miracles that they or others had wrought among them, to whom theſe very letters were ſent. *Truly the ſigns of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in all patience, in ſigns and wonders, and mighty deeds.* 2 Cor. xii. 12. *He therefore that miniſters to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* Gal. iii. 5. *For our Goſpel came not unto you in word only, but alſo in power, and in the Holy Ghoſt: God alſo bearing them witneſs, both with ſigns and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghoſt, according to his own will.* 1 Theſſ. i. 5. Heb. ii. 4. The writer doth not labour in the proof of theſe things, he ſuppoſes them well-known; he ſuſpects no doubt but they were convinced

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theſe

SERM. VI. theſe works had been done among them: the thing he is ſolicitous about is, that they would act ſuitably; and in conſequence of ſuch proofs, that they would be ſtedfaſt in the profeſſion of principles recommended by ſuch teſtimonials; that they would not be moved by the artifices of perſons who could not produce ſuch works. And if we conſider this, that there were ſome diviſions in the churches; that there were ſome perſons who were undermining the intereſt of the Apoſtles among them, and endeavouring to overturn the work the Apoſtles had begun; we can never imagine they would have expreſſed themſelves thus, but that they knew the perſons they wrote to had a conviction of the truth of what was wrote. Epiſtles are not treatiſes or hiſtories, ſent abroad to acquaint men of what they had not heard before: nor do theſe epiſtles tell them of wonders wrought in other churches; but, they contain references to works wrought among them, to whom they were ſent.

Yet, here is ſomewhat more in theſe epiſtles. Here are reproofs of the miſmanagement of gifts they were themſelves poſſeſſed of: direc-

tions

tions given about the better uſe and employment of them. Can this argument of their truth be any way evaded? *I thank my God always on your behalf, that in every thing you are inriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge: therefore, as you abound in every thing, in faith, in utterance, in knowledge: this only would I know, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?* In the xii. xiii. xiv. chapters of the firſt epiſtle to the *Corinthians*, are reckoned up divers ſorts of gifts eminent among them; not all indeed beſtowed upon one perſon; but ſome upon one, ſome upon another; though it ſhould ſeem, the Apoſtles, and perhaps ſome others, had all, or moſt of them. He argues, that as theſe were all derived from one and the ſame Spirit, into one body, they were not to foment any diviſions on the account of theſe things; and he that had a more ſplendid gift, was not to deſpiſe another who had not one ſo conſpicuous and remarkable; even as in the body, there are members more honorable, others leſs honourable; but all uſeful and neceſſary: they are exhorted ſeriouſly not to value themſelves too much upon theſe gifts; but though it was a privilege to enjoy them, and they were valu-

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1 Cor. i. 4, 5.

2 Cor. viii. 7.

Gal. iii. 2.

able

SERM. VI. able and desirable, yet they should rather aim to excel in love and charity, and other inter-

1 Cor. xii. 7. nal dispositions: *But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal: To one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; to another, the gifts of healing; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophesie; to another, the discerning of spirits; to another, divers kind of tongues; to another, the*

—ver. 28—31. *interpretation of tongues. God hath set some in the church, first Apostles, secondarily Prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues: Are all Apostles? are all Prophets? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? —Covet earnestly the best gifts: and*

—xiii. 8. *yet shew I unto you a more excellent way. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it*

—xiv. 5. *shall vanish away. I would that ye all spake with tongues, but rather that ye prophesied: for greater is he that prophesieth, than he that speaketh with tongues, except he interpret, that*

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three, and that by courſe, and let one interpret. —ver. 27.

Almoſt the whole xiv. chapter relates to this one point. If there were no ſuch gifts among them, would they have been cautioned not to over-value them? if one had not one gift which another wanted, could there have been advices not to deſpiſe another who had not ſo remarkable and ſplendid a gift? if there had not been ſome diſorderly uſe of propheſy, and the gift of tongues, would there have been ſo many directions earneſtly urged upon them, concerning the right and prudent uſe of them? could they tell themſelves, whether they had received ſuch gifts or not; and did not they know, whether others among them ſhewed ſuch gifts or not, or practiſed ſuch powers? If theſe things had not been thus, would this method of argument have recommended the perſons, or the doctrine of the Apoſtles, to them, who were declining from both; would it not have expoſed both to contempt and redicule? There were then certainly ſupernatural and uncommon gifts beſtowed on the Apoſtles, and the firſt converts to Chriſtianity, which

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SERM. VI. were teſtimonies of a divine commiſſion from heaven.

12. I ſhall mention but one particular more. *It appears from the books of the New Teſtament, that we have the concurring teſtimony of divers perſons.* For the hiſtory of our Saviour's preaching and miracles, has the name of four different writers; and the authors of the epiſtles make references to many of the facts ſet forth. The difference of ſtyle, manner of expreſſion, method and way of arguing upon ſome facts, ſufficiently aſſure us they did not all come from one hand: nay, the omiſſions of ſome things in one Goſpel, mentioned by another: the different order in which matters are related; the ſeeming contrarieties in ſome leſſer matters, may ſatisfy us that the three former Evangeliſts, *Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*, are three independent witneſſes; as for St. *John*, indeed there are reaſons to ſuppoſe he was acquainted with, and had ſeen the other Goſpels, before he wrote his. The ſmaller differences in ſome circumſtances of little or no moment, are ſo far from rendering the whole leſs credible, that they really add ſtrength to it, by preventing all ſuſpicion of concert. The

agreement is, upon the whole, ſo great, that it is hardly poſſible for four perſons to write a hiſtory of ſo many conſiderable things; to deliver an account of ſo many diſcourſes, parables delivered on various occaſions, ſo many miracles, ſo many precepts, rules, reflections, as the hiſtory of our Saviour contains, with a greater harmony and agreement than is here done, unleſs they had met together, or correſponded together for the performance of the work; and as it appears from the difference before-mentioned, there was no concert, ſo far from being a diminution, they are a confirmation of their truth and credibility. The deſign and tendency of the Apoſtles preaching, is conformable to the doctrine delivered by our Saviour in his life time, in the main: he did not indeed addreſs himſelf to Gentils, in his ordinary preaching, it is true. When he ſent forth the twelve in his life-time, he commanded them, ſaying, *Go not into the way of the Gentils; and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the loſt ſheep of the houſe of Iſrael:* whereas the Apoſtles did after his aſcenſion preach to Gentils as well as Jews, and aſſerted that they might be ſaved as well as the Jews. But the directions he gave them

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Mat. x. 5, 6.

SERM. VI. at firſt, it is plain, were not intended to be always binding. He gave ſufficient hints in his diſcourſes of this event in his life-time, in ſome diſcourſes, made in the hearing of the Phariſees, and Scribes, and others, as far as he thought proper, and at that time, and as they were able to bear it: he ſpoke very plainly to the woman of *Samaria*, when he told her, *the hour cometh, when ye ſhall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jeruſalem, worſhip the Father*; and that the true worſhippers of God, who ſerve him in ſpirit and in truth, in whatever place they called upon him, would be accepted of him: and before he aſcended he gave them orders to teach all nations: *Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt.*

John iv. 21.

Mat. xxviii. 19.

Theſe are all the particulars I ſhall produce, on the internal credibility of this Goſpel Hiſtory, the marks and characters of truth obſervable in the books of the New Teſtament. The points I have mentioned are, 1. Theſe books bear the names of particular perſons, except only the epiſtle to the Hebrews. 2. They are wrote in a language and ſtyle ſuited to the character

character of the perſons whoſe names they bear. 3. Here are characters and notes of times, as, that ſuch a thing happened when *Herod* was king of *Judea*, or when *Pilate* was governor. 4. The deſign of this hiſtory, and of the firſt preaching of the Goſpel, has nothing in it that ſhould tempt men to forgery and invention. 5. We find here a juſt and natural repreſentation of matters, with all the appearances of likelyhood and probability. 6. The impartiality of this hiſtory is another mark of its truth: many things are mentioned to appearance, and in the eye of the world, diſadvantageous to *Chriſt:* many things to appearance, and others in reality, diſadvantageous to the firſt diſciples, and firſt publiſhers of the Goſpel: and many diſorders and miſcarriages of the firſt converts to Chriſtianity. 7. The remarkable plainneſs and ſimplicity of the narration. 8. Here are many facts and circumſtances related in a manner that they might eaſily be confuted if not true. 9. Here are evident marks of the honeſty and integrity of the perſons engaged in the firſt publiſhing of the Goſpel, who were the witneſſes of the main facts here related, and on which the truth of the Goſpel depends. 10. Likewiſe that they were

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SERM. VI. not perſons of enthuſiaſtic principles. 11. That miracles were wrought, and extraordinary gifts conferred upon many perſons, appears from directions given in letters to perſons ſuppoſed to have themſelves ſeen theſe works, and ſhared in theſe benefits. 12. It appears from the books themſelves, that here is a harmony and agreement in theſe facts between divers independent witneſſes, who did not write in concert and correſpondence together.

Theſe particulars are ſufficient for the making out this argument, and to ſatisfy us that theſe writers have all the characters of truth and probability, which any hiſtory can have. Perhaps no hiſtory beſides, has them all in ſo eminent agreement: ſcarce any facts whatſoever are ſo well ſupported: and if they are true, we have the higheſt reaſon to reſt aſſured, our religion is true, and came from God.

This was what I was to prove; and if, in proſecution of this argument, in which I have made numerous references to paſſages of the ſacred ſcriptures, I have illuſtrated any paſſage

of ſcripture, or if any thing that has been here ſaid, may ſerve to raiſe your attention to the writings of the New Teſtament, or to direct you in the making farther remarks in the courſe of your private reading; then another valuable end has likewiſe been anſwered. SERM. VI.

And ſhall we leave this religion; *Chriſt*, who has the words of eternal life? Shall we exchange the certain proofs of a future life, for the uncertain obſcure arguments of immortality in *Plato* and *Cicero?*

SERMON VII.

The Moderation of Chriſtians to be known to all Men.

PHILIPP. iv. 5.

Let your Moderation be known unto all Men.

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THIS direction being near the end of St. *Paul*'s epiſtle, where are divers exhortations put down without any very nice and exact connection with each other; the coherence may not afford much light for ſettling the preciſe meaning.

I therefore immediately proceed to conſider the meaning of the word moderation. And

in the next place, (which will be the principal ſubject of our diſcourſe) I would ſhew, what is implied in this exhortation, as addreſſed to Chriſtians, that their *moderation ſhould be known unto all men.* SERM. VII.

I. In the firſt place we will conſider, *what is the meaning of the word moderation.* And though the coherence alone may not be ſufficient to determine the preciſe meaning, yet it is not fit that we ſhould quite overlook it. *I beſeeech Euodias, and beſeech Syntyche, that they be of the ſame mind in the Lord. And I entreat thee alſo, true yoke fellow, help thoſe women which laboured with me in the Goſpel, with Clement alſo, and with other my fellow labourers, whoſe names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again, I ſay, rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand: be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and ſupplication, with thankſgiving, let your requeſts be made known unto God.*

In our language, the word *moderation* may denote moderate affections for worldly things, and contentedneſſe of mind with a ſmall portion

SERM. VII. tion of the good things of this life, and ſatiſfaction in a low, or midling ſtation, or whatever the condition be which we are in, without aſpiring after great things:

But that is not the direct intention of the Apoſtle here. And there are ſome other places where the original word is uſed, which will lead us to the proper meaning of it. *Tertullus* pleading in behalf of the Jews againſt *Paul*, entreats the attention of the governor in this manner, as in our tranſlation: *I pray thee, that thou wouldſt hear us of thy clemency, a few words.* Where the original word for *clemency* is the ſame, which here in the text is rendered *moderation*. And therefore we are lead hereby to underſtand mildneſſe, equity. Again: *Now I Paul beſeech you by the meekneſſe and gentleneſſe of Chriſt.*

Acts xxiv. 4.

2 Cor. x. 1.

That therefore is the ſenſe, in which we are to take the word in this place. It is equivalent to mildneſſe, equity, gentleneſſe: and, it is eaſie to be perceived, this virtue has ſome reſpect to offences and injuries, or to ſuch perſons and things, as are ſome way offenſive and provoking.

II. In

II. In the ſecond place we ſhould conſider, SERM. VII.
what is implied in this direction, or exhortation, as given to Chriſtians.—Let your moderation be known unto all men.

They will, I apprehend, fulfil and obey this precept, if their moderation, that is, their mildneſſe, be conſpicuous, eminent, and remarkable.

And it may be ſuppoſed, that the moderation, or the mildneſſe, the equity, the gentleneſſe of any men will be conſpicuous and well-known in the world; if it appears in their conduct toward many perſons, upon a variety of occaſions, in different circumſtances, and if it be general among them: not in ſome few only, but in many, in all, or moſt of them.

1. *The mildneſſe of any body of men, or of Chriſtians, will be conſpicuous and well-known, if it appears in their conduct toward many perſons.*

Divers particulars do here offer themſelves to our obſervation. For we may ſoon perceive ſeveral

SERM. VII. ſeveral branches of this virtue particularly recommended by *Paul* in his epiſtles.

And doubtleſs, one inſtance of mildneſſe, meekneſſe, and patience, is carrying it well toward thoſe that differ from us, and treat us as enemies, or in an unkind and unfriendly manner. As a learned interpreter ſays, the Apoſtle here conſiders the *Philippians*, as in a ſtate of perſecution: to which ſtate, gentleneſſe or meekneſſe is peculiarly ſuited. And therefore the meaning of this exhortation is: However you ſuffer, let your moderation and gentleneſſe be conſpicuous to all men, and particularly to thoſe, at whoſe hands you ſuffer. Or, as another writer paraphraſeth the text, with its ſubſequent motive to obedience: "Be not rigorous in inſiſting upon your ut-"moſt right, nor impatient in ſuffering wrong: "but let your temper and compoſure of "mind be manifeſt to all ſorts of people, and "upon all occaſions. For conſider, that the "judge is not far off, who will certainly make "you amends for all your condeſcenſions, and "reward all your patience."

It

It is very likely, that this is one thing here particularly intended by St. *Paul*, and indeed, it is what muſt tend to render men's mildneſſe well-known and conſpicuous in the world: if they behave and carry it well under ſufferings, and toward thoſe who are injurious to them, and are the inſtruments of their ſufferings: when they forbear opprobrious and abuſive language, and keep their temper, and behave decently toward all men ſuitably to their ſeveral characters, whether magiſtrates, and others of ſuperior rank, and toward thoſe of mean condition: when they can expreſs good-will toward thoſe who perſecute them for innocent opinions, which they think they have good reaſon to believe and profeſs. SERM. VII.

If men, inſtead of allowing themſelves the liberty of reproachful language, and loud and clamorous complaints upon ſuch occaſions, do with evident tokens of ſincerity expreſs their good-will toward thoſe who evil entreat them, praying that they may be convinced of their miſtake, and that the favors of providence may be poured down upon them: this is a very laudable and amiable behaviour.

Farther,

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Farther, men's moderation will be eminent and conſpicuous, if under ſuch ſufferings they ſhew mildneſſe and equity toward their enemies and perſecutors of all ſorts. We can take hard uſage better of ſome than of others. The ſame treatment is more offenſive and provoking in one man than in another. It might be more grievous and afflictive to the Chriſtians in the time of the Apoſtles, to ſuffer perſecution from the Jews than from the Gentils. With the former they agreed in many points. They worſhipped the ſame God. They received their ancient ſcriptures; and believed in him whom their Prophets foretold: whilſt the Gentils knew not God: and the gods they worſhipped were eſteemed by the Chriſtians, as well as the Jews, to be no gods, but idols and vanities; and one great deſign of their religion was, to detect the falſhood and abſurdity of all idolatrous worſhip, and overthrow it.

It may be alſo more grievous and offenſive to be perſecuted by former friends, and the members of our own familie. And to be mild and patient under injuries from them, will ſhew great moderation.

Another

Another branch of moderation toward ſuch as differ from us is, mildneſſe and gentleneſſe in all debates and arguments for the truth of our religion: which we find recommended in the writings of *Chriſt*'s Apoſtles. Says St. *Peter*: *But ſanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an anſwer to every man that aſketh you a reaſon of the hope that is in you, with meekneſſe and fear.* That direction ſeems to be addreſſed to Chriſtians in general. St. *Paul* ſpeaking more eſpecially of thoſe who are in the miniſterial office, ſays: *And the ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekneſſe inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves, if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledgement of the truth.*

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1 Ep. iii. 15.

2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.

Whether it be any juſt ground of offence, that others differ from us or not; yet men are apt too often to take it amiſs, that others differ from them, and yield not to the force of thoſe arguments, which convince and ſatisfy themſelves. It is therefore a branch of mildneſſe, and very laudable, to bear patiently with thoſe who differ from us in point of religion, and calmly to propoſe our beſt arguments, and be willing

SERM. VII. willing to renew thoſe methods of conviction, which hitherto have been ineffectual.

Moreover, knowledge, or the opinion of it, puffeth up. The bare knowledge of ſome truths, which others are ignorant of, is made the ground of a haughty and inſolent behaviour. The Jewiſh people ſcorned ſubjection to Heathen magiſtrates; and there was danger, that Chriſtians would follow their example. Some Chriſtian ſervants were ready to deſpiſe their Heathen maſters: which is the reaſon of divers exhortations in the apoſtolical epiſtles. *Put them in mind to be ſubject to principalities and powers, to obey magiſtrates, to be ready to every good work: to ſpeak evil of no man, to be gentle, ſhewing all meekneſſe unto all men. For we ourſelves alſo were ſometime fooliſh, diſobedient. Servants, obey in all things your maſters, according to the fleſh. Servants, be obedient unto them which are your maſters, according to the fleſh, with fear and trembling, in ſingleneſſe of heart, as unto Chriſt.*

Titus iii. 1—3.

Col. iii. 22.

Eph. vi. 5.

It is alſo a part of gentleneſſe to do good to all men in diſtreſſe, whether agreeing in ſentiment with us, or not: conſidering them as

ſharers

ſharers with us in the ſame human nature, though they do not partake in the ſame ſpiritual privileges with ourſelves. As St. *Paul*'s directions are: *And let us not be wearie in well-doing: for in due ſeaſon we ſhall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men; eſpecially unto them who are of the houſhold of faith.* SERM. VII. Gal. vi. 9, 10.

This is one branch of moderation, equity and mildneſſe; to carry it well toward enemies, and thoſe who are of other ſentiments in things of a religious nature, and do good to them if they are in any reſpect indigent and neceſſitous.

There are other branches of moderation and equity relating to thoſe who are of the ſame religion with us: who believe in one God, as we do, and are ſervants and followers of one Lord, even *Jeſus Chriſt. Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentils, nor to the church of God.* 1 Cor. x. 32.

The equity and moderation to be practiſed by the ſtrong and weak Chriſtians, one toward another, is a point largely and particularly

SERM. VII. treated by the Apoſtle in the xivth and xvth to the Romans, and in ſome chapters of his epiſtles to the Corinthians. *Him that is weak in the faith receive you, but not to doubtful diſputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another who is weak eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth, deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not, judge him that eateth.* This is mildneſſe, this is moderation in matters of ſmall moment.

Rom. xiv. 1—3.

There is another branch of mildneſſe recommended by St. *Paul*, to be practiſed upon occaſion of ſome falls, or actions plainly contrarie to the Chriſtian doctrine and profeſſion. Such perſons, if they are not hardened, are to be treated with gentleneſſe. *Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are ſpiritual, reſtore ſuch an one in the ſpirit of meekneſſe: conſidering thyſelf, leaſt thou alſo be tempted. If any man obey not our word by this epiſtle, note that man, and have no companie with him, that he may be aſhamed—Yet count him not as an enemie, but admoniſh him as a brother.*

Gal. vi. 1.

2 Theſſ. iii. 14, 15.

And

And the Corinthian, who had offended ſo greatly, the Apoſtle directs to be received and comforted upon repentance. *Sufficient to ſuch a man is this puniſhment, which was inflicted of many. So that ye ought rather to forgive him, and comfort him, leaſt ſuch an one ſhould be ſwallowed up with over-much ſorrow.* SERM. VII. 2 Cor. ii. 6, 7.

There is a mildneſſe to be ſhewn to our brethren from whom we receive ſome injuries, or who are defective in ſome regards due to us. *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another: if any man have a quarrel againſt any. Even as Chriſt forgave you, ſo do ye.* Col. iii. 13.

And to the Corinthians, St. *Paul* writes in this manner: *Is it ſo, that there is not a wiſe man among you, no not one that ſhall be able to judge between his brethren? For brother goeth to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers. Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, becauſe ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? Why do ye not rather ſuffer yourſelves to be defrauded?* 1 Ep. vi. 5—7. Such inſtances as theſe there are of moderation and mildneſſe toward one another, or our Chriſtian friends and brethren.

Carrying it well toward each other, notwithſtanding a different ſentiment and practice in matters of leſſer moment:

In caſe of falls, or tranſgreſſions againſt plain precepts of the Goſpel, and the juſt rules of all true religion; receiving ſuch upon repentance:

Reproving and admoniſhing thoſe who offend in ſome inſtances with mildneſſe:

Gentleneſſe toward thoſe who offend, or are defective in their behaviour toward us:

And ſubmitting to ſome loſſe and damage, if it be of no great conſequence; without occaſioning a great deal of diſturbance about ſmall matters.

And that is one thing included in this direction: moderation toward *many perſons*; and *perſons of different characters and relations to us:* thoſe who are not of the ſame religion, and on that account are, in ſome reſpect, our enemies, and averſe to us: and to thoſe who are

are of the ſame religious ſentiments in the main. SERM. VII.

2. Another thing included in this direction may be, *practiſing moderation upon a great variety of occaſions.* Indeed this has been already ſhewn under the former particular; for I have mentioned various inſtances of mildneſs, both toward unbelievers, and to believers.

But all occaſions for the practiſing of equity can ſcarce be enumerated: however, a man of a mild and equitable principle, will be ready to ſhew it, when the circumſtances of things require it: he will be ſlow to wrath, backward to judge and cenſure: he will remember the Lord's command; *judge not, that ye be not judged:* and St. *Paul*'s direction; *judge nothing before the time:* he will not be over ready to receive charges againſt any, or credit diſadvantageous reports and ſurmiſes. Equitable perſons have alſo a reſpect to the ſtations and characters of men; agreeably to that direction of St. *Paul* to *Timothie: Againſt an elder, receive not an accuſation, but before two or three witneſſes.* This is another thing

1 Ep. v. 19.

SERM. VII. included in this direction: *Let your moderation be known unto all men*; ſhew it, and practice it upon many occaſions.

3. Shew moderation *in every circumſtance*: not only when you are in adverſity and affliction, but alſo when you are in proſperity and honour: not only when you are few in number, and weak in compariſon of others who differ from you, but when you are in power, and are the moſt in number. If in change of circumſtances, you are not changed, nor your outward conduct altered, it will appear, that your minds are governed by ſome reaſonable principle of action: but if men who were once, to appearance, meek and quiet under afflictions, become arrogant and impoſing, upon their being exalted, their former ſubmiſſion and peaceableneſs will be imputed to fear, and an abject mind; not unto mildneſſe of temper, or a ſerious regard to the rule of right.

And, as change of circumſtance for the better, is very apt to affect men's minds; good men need directions and cautions in ſuch a caſe. The Gentils who received the word of the Goſpel from the Apoſtles of *Chriſt*, were doubtleſs

doubtleſs at firſt much pleaſed with the kind regard ſhewn them, and thankful for the privileges vouchſafed them: but yet, when their numbers encreaſed, and their freedom from the law of *Moſes* was better eſtabliſhed, they ſoon began to ſhew ſome tokens of ſcorn and diſdain that were not becoming. St. *Paul* perceived it, though himſelf the Apoſtle of the Gentils, and the great patron of their liberty; and therefore inſerted that argument in the epiſtle to the Romans: *And if ſome of the branches be broken off, and thou a wild olive wert grafted in among them,—boaſt not againſt the branches: but if thou boaſt, thou bearеſt not the root, but the root thee.—Be not high minded; but fear.* SERM. VII. —xi. 17.

4. The moderation, or mildneſs of Chriſtians, or any other people, will be conſpicuous, and known to all men, *when it is a prevailing temper, and is general among them; in men of every relation, and every condition.*

When they who teach the principles of religion, ſtrive not to act with a high hand, and advance their authority; but recommend and enforce their doctrine and their admonitions by

SERM. VII. reaſons and arguments; and renew and repeat their inſtructions, for the ſake of thoſe who are not ſo tractable, or ſo acute and ready, as others: labour, both in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon; behave not as lords of other men's faith, but helpers of their joy, and their ſervants for *Chriſt*'s ſake, to aſſiſt their proficience in knowledge and virtue; and as St. *Peter*'s expreſſions are, *not as lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock:* and when they who are inſtructed and taught, ſuffer the word of exhortation, conſidering that they who act faithfully in their office of teaching others, *watch over their ſouls, as they that muſt give account*; and are deſirous *that they may do it with joy, and not with grief*; for that would not be profitable for any.

1 Ep. v. 3.

Heb. xiii. 17.

And St. *Paul* directs the Corinthians with regard to *Timothie*, though young, and unexperienced, or not equally experienced with ſome of greater age: *See that he may be with you without fear: for he worketh the work of the Lord, as I alſo do: let no man therefore deſpiſe him.* It may be a branch of equity to eſteem ſome men *highly in love for their works ſake*, without indulging too nice a taſte, and cenſorious

1 Cor. xvi. 10.

1 Theſſ. v. 13.

ſorious critical remarks upon every perform- SERM. VII.
ance.

In like manner with regard to ſome private relations: it will tend to render men's moderation and mildneſs conſpicuous in the world, when it is generally practiſed among them: when parents endeavour to bring up their children *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, without provoking them to wrath*; and when children chearfully acknowledge the juſt authority of parents, and obey them in *all* things, ſo far as can be done with a good conſcience: and when others, intruſted with the education and care of inſpecting young perſons, break not their tender ſpirits by unreaſonable harſhneſs and ſeverity, but excite and encourage them by reaſon, good words, and kind uſage: and they of younger years ſhew themſelves ſome indication of their being ſenſible a regard and reſpect is due to thoſe who inſtil knowledge into their minds, and appear to be concerned to lay the foundation of their future welfare and proſperity in ſoul and body. Ep. vi. 4.

When

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When maſters give unto their ſervants that which is *juſt and equal*, forbear *threatning*; and when ſervants *anſwer not again*, and are faithful and dilligent in the ſervice, not only of thoſe maſters who are exceeding good and tender, but even of thoſe likewiſe, who at ſome times are froward and ſevere.

When, finally, men of every condition, high and low; thoſe who have fewer advantages of reading and obſervation, as well as others learned, knowing, and acquainted with the world; when even theſe alſo join in approving moderation and equity, and can ſay ſomething in favour of the ſeveral branches of moderation before-mentioned, with regard to men of different ſentiments, or to thoſe who fall and offend, or are injurious in ſome inſtances; as, That there is between all men, a parity, or equality of nature: that we are all weak and fallible: that *Jeſus Chriſt* our Lord bid us not to judge, leſt we be judged: that our Lord graciouſly received *Peter* and the other Apoſtles, though in the time of his great temptation they were offended in him: that the Chriſtian religion was at firſt propounded and ſpread in the world, upon the ground of

reaſon and evidence, without human power and authority: and that they apprehend the ſetting before men the evidences of its truth, which appear in the New Teſtament, will be the moſt effectual way to advance the true intereſt of religion. That *Chriſt* ſaid, *his kingdom is not of this world:* and that he bid his Diſciples to conſider themſelves as brethren, and not to exalt themſelves one above another: that in the New Teſtament, men are directed to try or *prove all things*; which muſt ſuppoſe a right to judge upon evidence, and as things appear to men, after ſerious and impartial examination and conſideration. SERM. VII.

Theſe are particulars, by which the moderation of any ſect, or body of men, will become conſpicuous, and known to all men: when they ſhew moderation and equity to *many perſons*, upon *various occaſions*, in *different circumſtances*, and when it is *a prevailing general virtue among them.*

Let me add a few remarks.

1. *Chriſtians have the moſt forcible arguments and inducements, and the beſt aſſiſtances, of any men,*

SERM. VII. *men, for the practice of moderation, mildneſſe, and equity.* Foraſmuch as they have had experience of the mercies of God, and *Chriſt Jeſus*, in forgiving them, and ſhewing toward them great mildneſs, tenderneſſe, and equity: they have alſo been taught to love one another, and all men, ſo as no other men have been taught: and the principles of love will mightily diſpoſe to mildneſſe and gentleneſſe; for 1 Cor. xiii. *love ſuffereth long, and is kind; it is not eaſily provoked, is not puffed up; it beareth all things; believeth all things; hopeth all things:* Moreover, they know and expect the righteous judgment of God, *who will render to every one according to his work.* The Lord *is at hand*, and will do right to thoſe who are injured: and the virtue of thoſe who ſuffer patiently, and endure according to the will of God, ſhall be fully rewarded. The obſerving the rule immediately preceding this text, will be of uſe here: *Rejoice in the Lord always; and again I ſay rejoice.* If men are well pleaſed with themſelves, and are eaſie in their own minds, and have cauſe to rejoice in God, as their defence and portion, few things can happen, that will tranſport them beyond the bounds of moderation and equity.

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2. *The practice of mildneſſe and moderation does not imply an approbation of any thing that is evil*, any more than the long-ſuffering and forbearance which God exerciſes toward ſinners, ought to be underſtood to countenance, and be an approbation of their evil ways. But this is a ſtate of trial, not of judgment or retribution: and as the divine long-ſuffering is deſigned to afford men an opportunity, and to lead them to repentance, ſo the mildneſſe practiſed by men, one toward another, will conduce to the peace of ſociety, the preſent welfare of particular perſons, and will be an excellent means of reclaiming men from errors, both in judgment and practice.

3. We may hence infer, that *moderation will be for the honour, intereſt, and advantage of the Chriſtian religion.* I ſay, that from this direction of the Apoſtle, we may reaſonably conclude, that mildneſſe, or moderation or equity, among Chriſtians, will be to the honour of their religion; otherwiſe, certainly the Apoſtle had not directed Chriſtians, to *let* their *moderation be known to all men.* Some might poſſibly be apt to think that rigour, harſhneſſe, ſeverity, might be more uſeful than moderation

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deration and mildneſſe. But ſince, as before obſerved, mildneſſe toward men is not an approbation of any thing that is wrong; and men may be differently treated, according to their different conduct; [they who are unruly, are to be warned; and ſtill ſome may be reproved with authority] moderation or mildneſs, in the ſeveral inſtances above named, will not be hurtful, but advantageous.

If any men, any ſocieties, or bodies of men, are remarkable for mildneſſe and moderation towards one another, and other men, it will conduce to their honour and intereſt; others will be invited and induced to join themſelves to them, and take upon themſelves the obſervation of the mild rules of virtue taught by them, joined with much meekneſſe, moderation, and forbearance toward thoſe unruly, diſobedient, and miſled upon many occaſions.

And indeed, we may be aſſured, that moderation or mildneſſe is a great virtue; it being often commanded and inforced under many other words in the writings of the Apoſtles, beſides thoſe which have been quoted in the

ſeveral

ſeveral parts of this diſcourſe. *For the fruit of the ſpirit is love, joy, peace, long-ſuffering, gentleneſſe, goodneſſe, meekneſſe.* And St. *James* ſays, *The wiſdom that is from above, is firſt pure, then peaceable, gentle, and eaſie to be entreated, full of mercie and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocriſie.*

SERM. VII. Gal. v. 22. Ch. iii. 17.

SERMON

SERMON VIII.

On keeping the Heart.

PROV. iv. 23.

Keep thy Heart with all Diligence: for out of it are the Iſſues of Life.

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THE aphoriſms and maxims, counſels and directions, of this book of Proverbs, are oftentimes put down, without any dependence on each other, or particular regard to the order of things: In this chapter there is a connection; and the precepts here delivered, recommend themſelves to our attention and regard, not only by their internal worth, and real uſefulneſſe, but alſo by the order in which they are

are placed, and the full and copious manner in which the argument is treated. SERM. VIII.

To obſerve only the latter part of the chapter, from ver. 20 to the end. Firſt, there is a very earneſt and affectionate call to men, eſpecially the younger, carefully to attend to, and keep the advices delivered; aſſuring them, that they are things of the greateſt uſe and importance; which earneſtly proceeds from a full perſuaſion of the truth and worth of the things ſaid, an apprehenſion that thoſe to whom they are offered, are too apt to neglect them, or too liable to be miſled after all; and from an ardent deſire of the welfare of thoſe who are addreſſed to. *My Son, attend to my words, incline thine ear unto my ſayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes: keep them in the midſt of thine heart; for they are life unto thoſe that find them, and health to all their fleſh.* —ver. 20, 21, 22.

As if he ſaid, "I muſt again once more repeat my requeſt, that you will take heed "to my advice, and ſeriouſly conſider theſe "exhortations which proceed from a ſincere "affection for your welfare. Peruſe them over "and over, keep them perpetually in mind, and "lay them up in your memorie as a precious

SERM. VIII. "treaſure. For they will contribute greatly "to the happineſſe of all who become tho- "roughly acquainted with them: they will be "of uſe to men of every temper, and in every "condition; and prove an admirable ſupport "under troubles and afflictions.[a]"

Then follows a methodical monition, conſiſting of ſeveral parts; firſt, directing the government of the heart, or the mind, and its powers; then the lips and eyes, and the feet.

Ver. 23. *Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.* That is, the counſels I give you are ſuch as theſe: In the firſt place, and above all things, ſet a ſtrict guard upon your thoughts and affections, and all the inward motions of your ſoul; for the good or bad conduct in life depends very much upon this, and conſequently your welfare or miſerie, here and hereafter.

Ver. 24. *Put away from thee a froward mouth: and perverſe lips put far from thee.* Avoid ſinful words, and be upon your guard

[a] See *Patrick.*

not

not to tranſgreſs with your lips: for as ſome SERM. VIII.
interpreters [a] ſuppoſe, here is a twofold admonition; not to ſin with the tongue ourſelves, nor to hearken to the evil ſpeeches of others. "Set a watch upon thy ears, and upon thy "mouth; nor ſpeak things contrarie to truth, "righteouſneſſe, or religion; not liſtening to "thoſe that do, but baniſhing ſuch, as far as "poſſible, from all friendſhip and familiarity."

Ver. 25. *Let thine eyes look right on: and let thine eye-lids look ſtraight before thee.* That is, as ſome paraphraſe and explain theſe words:[b] "Direct all thine actions by a good intention "to a right end, and keep thy mind fixed "upon the way that leads to it." Or, as others:[c] "The eyes alſo are dangerous in-"lets to the heart: therefore watch them "well, that they do not gaze about, and "faſten upon every object that invites them: "but let them be fixed upon one ſcope, as "thy thoughts ought to be, and from which "let nothing divert them."

[a] *Patrick.* [b] *Pool.* [c] *Patrick.*

SERM. VIII. Ver. 26. *Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be eſtabliſhed.* Act not without thought and conſideration; but weigh and conſider well before-hand, eſpecially in things of any moment, or that are liable to doubt and ſuſpicion, whether they are agreeable to the rule of right: then thy works and actions will be ſuch as will bear to be canvaſſed and examined: you will be able to reflect upon them with pleaſure afterwards, and they will alſo be approved by others, that are wiſe and virtuous.

Ver. 27. *Turn not to the right hand, nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil:* Hereby many underſtand to be meant: "flee extremes: "avoid ſuperſtition on the one hand, and "neglect of religion on the other:" But it ſeems to me, that the direction may be as well underſtood to contain an admonition to ſteadineſs in religion and virtue: "And do not "ſuffer yourſelves to be drawn aſide from the "path of virtue, or to divert at all upon any "conſideration from the ſtrait line of duty: let "no conſideration whatever, neither entice-"ments of friends, or provocations of enemies, "proſperous or croſs events, move you to de-

"part

" part at all from the way of your duty; SERM. VIII.
" and moſt ſtudiouſly preſerve yourſelves from
" doing any kind of iniquity."

So is this context.

Our deſign at preſent is, to conſider the leading direction in this exhortation, *Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.* And I ſhall ſpeak briefly to the ſeveral particulars in the text.

I ſhall conſider,

I. What is meant by the *heart.*

II. What we are to underſtand by *keeping* it.

III. The *manner* in which the heart ought to be kept; *with all diligence.*

IV. The argument and reaſon, why we ought ſo to keep the heart: *out of it are the iſſues of life.*

To which I ſhall add:

SERM. VIII. V. A reflection or two by way of application.

I. We ſhould briefly obſerve what is meant by the *heart*. But it is needleſs to enlarge here, or to take notice of the ſeveral more particular ſenſes and acceptations of the word in ſcripture: where it may ſometimes denote the *underſtanding* more eſpecially; as when it is ſaid, *their fooliſh heart was darkened:* or the *memorie*; as when the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Thy word have I hid in mine heart:* or the *conſcience*; *If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.* But the more common, and general ſenſe of the word is, the *mind*, the *ſoul*; and ſo theſe texts juſt mentioned are alſo underſtood.

Rom. i. 21.

Pſ. cxix. 11.

1 John iii. 20.

I ſuppoſe then that here, as very frequently in the metaphorical ſtile of ſcripture, the *heart* is put for the *ſoul*, or the *inward man*, the ſoul and its faculties: or, the *mind*, together with all its powers and faculties, and their ſeveral operations; or the thoughts, affections, intentions, and deſigns of man.

2. The

II. The ſecond thing to be conſidered is, what we are to underſtand by *keeping the heart*. And this expreſſion is ſuppoſed by many to be metaphorical: keep thy heart, as a temple, ſay ſome, pure and undefiled. Or, keep thy heart, ſay others, as a garriſon: the ſoul being, as it were, beſieged by many enemies. Some alſo carry on the metaphor in the other directions that follow, relating to the *mouth*, the *eyes*, the *feet*; and they ſay: "As they that de-"fend a city, ſet a ſtrong guard at the gates "and poſterns; ſo do you upon your ears, and "mouth, and eyes." But I apprehend, we are not obliged to attend to ſuch a metaphor here. The word *keeping* ſeems to denote all that can be meant by a due care of the mind, and its actions, or thoughts: *keep thy heart*; obſerve it, cultivate, and improve it; *watch it, and attend to all its motions*; guard againſt every evil thought, as well as againſt evil actions: and employ and exerciſe the mind well. SERM. VIII.

This I take to be the general meaning and deſign of the expreſſion, *keep thy heart:* Let me mention ſome particulars, as contained, and implied herein.

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1. Keep, or take care of thy heart: that is, that you cultivate and improve it, and that you have *right ſentiments of things.* It is an obſervation of the ſame wiſe man, whoſe words we are commenting, *That the ſoul be without knowledge, it is not good.* There is a woe pronounced againſt thoſe *that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkneſs for light, and light for darkneſs; that put bitter for ſweet, and ſweet for bitter.* It is one great and main deſign of the teachings and inſtructions of the prophets and the wiſe men under the Old Teſtament, to give men right ſentiments concerning religion: to help them to know and underſtand what is good, and what is evil, and what God moſt approves of, and delights in: that though he had enjoyned for wiſe reaſons, upon the people under his ſpecial care at that time, numerous external waſhings, purifications, and various ſacrifices and offerings at the temple; that, nevertheleſs, *truth* and *righteouſneſſe* in their dealings with one another, and a ſerious awful apprehenſion of the divine majeſty, the Former of all things, and ſentiments of love and gratitude to him for all his benefits, were the moſt valuable parts and branches, and acts of religion. *He hath*

Prov. xix. 2.

Iſai. v. 20.

Micah vi. 8.

ſhewed

ſhewed thee, O man, what is good: and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do juſtly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? SERM. VIII.

For I deſired mercie, and not ſacrifice; and the knowledge of God, more than burnt offerings. Hoſea vi. 6.

And there are very frequent and earneſt exhortations to ſeek religious knowledge: there are many ſuch in this book of Proverbs. *Bow down thine ear, and hear the words of the wiſe; and apply thine heart unto my knowledge. That thy truſt may be in the Lord, I have made known unto thee this day, even unto thee. Have not I written unto thee excellent things in counſel and knowledge? that I might make thee know the certainty of the words of truth: that thou mightſt anſwer the words of truth, to them that ſend unto thee?* —chap. xxii. 17. —ver. 19, 20, 21. This knowledge is excellent and uſeful: to know the differences of things: what God moſt approves of: to have right apprehenſions of the greatneſs, goodneſs, truth, and faithfulneſs, and purity of God. That he is a God over all gods, the Former of all things, the governor of the world, able and willing to reward them that diligently ſeek him: and that bleſſed are all they that ſerve him, and put their truſt in him.

2. Another

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2. Another thing implied in keeping the heart, or in the care of the mind, here recommended, is, *to form fixed purpoſes and reſolutions of acting according to the rule of right.* The firſt care is, that the mind be well informed: ſecondly, that it be well reſolved. We are to ſee, that we not only know what is good, and refuſe the evil: but we are to chuſe the one, and reſolve to avoid the other. *My Son, give me thy heart.* And this is the deſign of the exhortation at the beginning of this chapter, to determine men to the choice of religion and her ways. *Get wiſdom, get underſtanding—forſake her not, and ſhe ſhall preſerve thee: love her, and ſhe ſhall keep thee: exalt her, and ſhe ſhall promote thee: ſhe ſhall bring thee to honour, when thou doſt embrace her.* And Pſalm cxix. *I have choſen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me. Depart from me, ye evil doers, for I will keep the commandments of my God.* There ſhould be a fixed and determined purpoſe of mind, to avoid all known ſin, and perform all known duty, and to reſiſt temptations when they aſſault us. The way of religion ſhould be our willing choice, conſidering its excellence, and the advantages that attend it: and becauſe of the deceitfulneſs of our

Pr. xxiii. 26.

Ver. 30.

Ver. 115.

our hearts, and the face and danger of external temptations, our reſolutions ſhould be very explicit and firm. Pſalm cxix. 106. *I have ſworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.* Pſalm xvii. 3. *Thou haſt proved mine heart; thou haſt viſited me in the night; thou haſt tried me, and ſhalt find nothing: I am purpoſed, that my mouth ſhall not tranſgreſs.* SERM. VIII.

3. In this keeping the heart is implied a direction to *govern the affections.* As the judgment ſhould be well informed; and the will rightly fixed and determined: ſo alſo the affections ſhould be well ordered and governed.

Particularly, our deſires and averſions, our joy and grief, our hopes and fears, our love and hatred.

(1.) *Our deſires and averſions.* They ſhould be well regulated. The higheſt eſteem ſhould be placed upon thoſe things that are moſt valuable in themſelves, and moſt important. Take care that you eſteem and deſire ſpiritual and heavenly things, more than worldly and earthly things, that are but temporal. Saith St. *John, Love not the world:* 1 Ep. ii. 15, 16. *neither*

SERM. VIII. *neither the things that are in the world: If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the luſt of the fleſh, the luſt of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world paſſeth away, and the luſt thereof. But he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.* We ſhould therefore deſire, to ſecure a treaſure in heaven and an intereſt in a future happineſs, above all earthly poſſeſſions and advantages.

(2.) *Our joy and grief.* The good order of theſe affections will follow upon that of the two other, if we are more deſirous of, more ſolicitous for ſpiritual and heavenly things: if they have our firſt and higheſt eſteem, our joy and ſatisfaction on account of proſperity and ſucceſs in the purſuit of earthly advantages will be moderate: and our grief and concern under afflictions and loſſes, relating to this life, will not be exceſſive, but within due bounds.

(3.) *Our hopes and fears* ought alſo to be regulated. Our chief dependence ſhould be on God, not on man. Our truſt and hope ſhould be placed in God, not in creatures. He is infinitely more able, and more equitable than men;

men: and therefore in him we ſhould con- SERM. VIII.
fide; and make it our chief care to pleaſe him, and approve ourſelves to him. In his favour is life, and his loving kindneſs is better than life. He can beſtow a better, and more durable happineſs than this world affords: and he will not fail them that truſt him according to the directions of his word, and that ſerve him in the way of his commandments.

Our *fears* likewiſe are to be regulated. We are to fear God more than men. This is of importance to right conduct. If men, who had power and influence, did always encourage virtue, and require nothing but what is fit to be done: if their will and pleaſure were always reaſonable; then we ſhould have no occaſion to fear them, whilſt we do well. But as the ſincere profeſſion of truth is often diſcountenanced by the powers of this world; and the will of God only, is always right; there is need we ſhould be upon our guard againſt an undue fear of men. Our Lord therefore cautioned his diſciples againſt the fear of men, whoſe power reached not beyond this life: and rather to fear him who

SERM. VIII. is able to deſtroy both ſoul and body, and aſſign them to everlaſting pain and miſerie.

(4.) We ought alſo to regulate *our love and hatred:* I mean now chiefly with regard to our fellow creatures: our approbation and diſlike; our favour or diſpleaſure: that we cheriſh benevolence, inward good-will; and do not admit groundleſs reſentment and anger, or indulge exceſſive or laſting diſpleaſure. As Pr.xvi.32. *Solomon* ſays: *He that is ſlow to anger, is better than the mighty: and he that ruleth his ſpirit, than he that taketh a city.*

This is another thing implied in keeping the heart; *governing the affections:* particularly, our deſires and averſions, joy and grief, hopes and fears, love and hatred.

4. Another thing that may be intended in keeping the heart is, *planting and cheriſhing in the mind, good principles and diſpoſitions,* and cleanſing it from all contrarie, evil diſpoſitions and propenſities. Particularly, it is of importance, that we root out pride, and high conceit of ourſelves; inward contempt and diſdain of other men: and that we cultivate humility

of mind; meekneſs of temper: we ſhould likewiſe be concerned to improve in a religious awe and apprehenſion of the divine majeſty, and take care to be in the fear of God all the day long, and all the days of our life. For the fear of the Lord is the beginning, the ſource, and principle of wiſdom. We ſhould alſo cheriſh a faith in inviſible things, which will be a great ſecurity of every virtue, and encourage a right conduct. SERM. VIII.

5. And laſtly, *By keeping the heart* may be meant and intended, *a due care and concern that the mind be well employed:*

There muſt be a guard ſet upon the acts, or operations of the mind: and the thoughts ſhould be exerciſed on fit objects. Vain thoughts ſhould not lodge within us: no evil thoughts ſhould be indulged and cheriſhed. The mind ſhould be employed and taken up, not in things uſeleſs and inſignificant; but much about things profitable and important: we ſhould contemplate the works of God, meditate on his word, conſider our ways, reflect upon ourſelves, confirm our reſolutions of virtue,

SERM. VIII. virtue, and our abhorrence of evil; form good deſigns, and think and contrive how we may beſt bring them to paſs. We ſhould frequently aſcend in acts of humble, believing, grateful devotions to God.

That is the ſecond thing, what it is to *keep the heart*. 1. It implies a taking care, that the mind be furniſhed with neceſſarie knowledge, and *juſt ſentiments of things*, concerning good and evil. 2. To keep the heart, implies a *concern to form fixed purpoſes and reſolutions* to act according to the rule of right. 3. It implies *the government* and regulation *of the affections*. 4. *Implanting and cheriſhing good diſpoſitions*, and rooting out thoſe that are evil and ſinful. 5. It implies *a care, that the mind be well employed*.

III. The next thing obſervable in the words is, the *manner* in which the heart ought to be kept; *with all diligence*: literally, according to the Hebrew, *with all keeping*. The connexion, which was ſhewn before, helps us to underſtand diſtinctly and clearly the deſign of this expreſſion, in this exhortation. This is the

the firſt counſel: then follow thoſe before taken notice of, and briefly paraphraſed. *Put away from thee a froward mouth: let thine eyes look right on:* and *ponder the path of thy feet:* that is, care ought to be taken of theſe; that we ſin not with our lips, and that our actions are righteous and virtuous. But the firſt and chief care ought to be about the heart: the mind, and its inward operations: *Keep thy heart with all diligence.* SERM. VIII.

IV. The fourth particular obſervable in the words is, the argument, and motive, ſo *to keep the heart:* it is taken from the importance of ſo doing: *out of it are the iſſues of life.* Our good, or our bad conduct, and the conſequences of each depend hereupon. As the heart is, ſo is the man: ſo will be the words and actions. The ſtreams muſt partake of the qualities of the fountain. Or, as our bleſſed Lord ſays: *A good tree bringeth not forth corrupt fruit; neither doth a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit: For every tree is known by its fruit.—A good man, out of the good treaſure of his heart, bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man, out of the evil treaſure of his heart, that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his* Luke vi. 43—45.

SERM. VIII. *mouth ſpeaketh.* And to the like purpoſe in *Matthew.* Again, *Woe unto you Scribes and Phariſees, hypocrites: for ye make clean the outſide of the cup and platter; but within they are full of extortion and exceſs.* You aim at a fair outward appearance, by obſerving thoſe acts of devotion, and that zeal for the temple, that is taking among men; without aiming at virtuous habits, and conſequently are defective in acts of juſtice and goodneſs. *Thou blind Phariſee! cleanſe firſt that which is within the cup, and the platter; that the outſide of them may be clean alſo.* Firſt cleanſe your heart, and cultivate the ſincere upright diſpoſition of mind; and your life will be an uniform pattern of virtue, conſiſting in devout and fervent worſhip of God, and works of righteouſneſs and goodneſs among men: which will be really worthie, and valuable; truly becoming, acceptable and agreeable.

xii. 33—35. Mat. xxiii. 25, 26.

This is the argument, to keep the heart with all diligence: *out of it are the iſſues of life:* The words and actions depend hereupon. If the heart be quite neglected, the life will be very irregular: if the heart be well kept, cul-

tivated, obſerved, and watched, your life will be excellent and commendable: SERM. VIII.

Moreover, the different conſequences of good, and bad conduct, as already hinted, depend hereupon. You cannot otherwiſe approve yourſelves to God, but muſt be rejected by him, who ſees and knows the heart, as well as the outward actions.

I have now explained the ſeveral parts of the text. I have ſhewn what is here meant by the *heart*. Wherein *keeping it* conſiſts. The *manner* in which it ought to be kept. The *importance of ſo doing*: or the arguments and motives ſo to keep it.

V. I ſhall conclude with two reflections only, in the way of application.

1. We hence perceive, that *true religion, even under the ancient diſpenſation, did not conſiſt only in external worſhip, and good actions, but alſo in pious diſpoſitions of the mind.* Indeed the laws of *Moſes*, being many of them civil and political, are very much concerned about words only, and external actions: and many men

SERM. VIII. were too apt to content themſelves with a fair, outward, and viſible appearance in the eye of men, and ſome tolerable regularity of outward actions and behaviour. But it is certain, they were obliged to more than this; and good men obſerved their thoughts as well as their actions. And the wiſe, and thoſe who were favoured with a prophetical gift, or commiſſion, faithfully repreſented to men the extent, purity, and perfection of the divine law.

Pſ. xxxvii. 31. Of a good man, it is ſaid: *The law of his God is in his heart.* And the Pſalmiſt prays, that

Pſ. cxix. 36. —ver. 8. God would *incline his heart unto his teſtimonies,* and *not to covetouſneſs.* Again: *Let my heart be found in thy ſtatutes.* Men were reminded

Jer. xvii. 10. by the Prophets, that *the Lord ſearches the heart, and tries the reins, even to give to every man according to his ways, according to the fruit*

Pſ. xxxvii. 37. *of his doings.* And they were called upon to *mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.*

2. Let us attend to this counſel of *Solomon,* and the importance of it. And do we not ſee one great reaſon of the many defects and errors of our conduct? that we do not keep our heart with all diligence. We have too much

neglected that which is a principal point: con- SERM. VIII.
ſidering that God equally knows all things, we ought to be equally concerned about our thoughts, and our outward actions. But there is alſo another reaſon for a ſtrict care of the heart; that ſo much depends upon it. Uniform virtue and eminence therein, will never be attained without it. We ſhall alſo, for want of this care, be very liable to be ſurpriſed into ſin many ways. Is not this the occaſion of many of our failings? that the inward principle of faith in God, is weak, and fear of men prevailing. The love of this world is unſubdued: and our affections are not ſet on things above, as they ſhould be, but rather on things of this earth. How can it be expected we ſhould be prepared for temptations, if we do not carefully keep our heart? No wonder, that we often tranſgreſs with our lips, or that imprudences, failings, and even greater faults, appear in our behaviour, if we do not watch our hearts. It is very likely, that there will be many bad conſequences of this neglect: we ſhall be oftentimes unſatisfied and diſcontented with our condition, poſſibly without any reaſon. We ſhall greatly miſbehave under afflictions; proſperity will be very dangerous: and the

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SERM. VIII.

the offences and provocations we meet with from men, will mightily diſconcert us, and occaſion undue reſentment and diſpleaſure.

If we are ſenſible of a defect this way: let us be, for the future, more frequent in meditation and conſideration: let us be more careful of our inward temper, and the frame of our heart: let us diligently cultivate right ſentiments, holy reſolutions, and good habits of the mind: let us learn the regulation and government of our affections, and how to employ our thoughts upon profitable ſubjects: It is a thing of great importance. Diligence herein will be very advantageous; and negligence very prejudicial, and detrimental in the end. *Keep* then *thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the iſſues of life.*

THE END.

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